TOLD THROUGH THE AGES

BRITAIN LONG AGO

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The Land of Faery

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BRITAIN LONG AGO

STORIES FROM OLD ENGLISH AND CELTIC SOURCES

RETOLD BY

E. M. WILMOT-BUXTON

AUTHOR OF
"TOLD BY THE NORTHMEN" "OLD CELTIC TALES"
"THE BOOK OF RUSTEM" ETC.

Literature, properly so called, draws its sap from the deep soil of human nature's common and everlasting sympathies, the gathered leaf-mould of countless generations, and not from any top-dressing capriciously scattered over the surface at some master's bidding.

LOWELL

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Foreword

To the Children who read this Book.

IT is a well-known fact that the only use of a preface, or "foreword" as our ancestors would have called it, is to be skipped. But I want to say just a few words to those boys and girls into whose hands this little book may fall, in order that they may enjoy the reading of the stories none the less, and perhaps a little more. In the first place, those who read it for pure amusement may be interested to know that centuries ago other boys and girls of their own race listened to these very same stories, and enjoyed them just as, I hope, you will do. I say "listened," for there were few books in those days, and no free libraries or bookshops. Yet there *were* libraries too, only they were kept packed away in one's head instead of on shelves. And really, it was most convenient; for when we move about a good deal we cannot always carry with us just the books we want, so the old method of keeping a "head library" was a good one on occasion. Of course, all heads were not equally well stored, and it became the profession of men, called at one time "bards," sometimes "scops" or "minstrels," to go from court to court and from district to district, carrying with them these libraries of which I spoke. Wherever they went they were treated with much

honour and consideration, and after supper men and women and children would crowd into the dimly lighted banquet-halls, and sit on the rush-covered floors, listening spellbound to the poems and stories which the travelling minstrel recited before the lord of the house. Most of these tales were in verse, for the reason that it was so much easier to remember metrical or rhyming lines than plain prose. And if a baron were rich enough he would keep a minstrel or bard of his own, or sometimes several of them, so that he always had his library at hand.

Now, it seems a pity that the boys and girls of the present day should lose the chance of knowing these charming tales of olden days because they were told and written down in what seems to them a foreign tongue. The Celtic tales are "foreign" to English children, for the English language has kept very few of the real Celtic words, but those from Old and Middle English sources are really in the very same tongue that our ancestors spoke in the days before the Conquest and in the period about two centuries after that event.

Then I want to say a word to those boys or girls who are fond of studying the history of literature. I daresay it has happened to them in the course of their study to hear or read of works which seem by their position in literature to be of great importance, but which often remain merely names to them. They read, for instance, that "Beowulf" was the first great English epic, and probably their teacher or their book tells them a little about it—just enough to let them know that Beowulf was a very splendid sort of fellow. Then there is generally a rather scrappy mention of the English Chronicle, as the

"Storehouse of Old English Prose," and of a collection of Welsh tales called the "Mabinogion." Any boy or girl who has a real taste for literature, as well as a love for stories as stories, scents a source of interest and amusement here if only he or she knew how to get hold of the material. But hearing that these things are "Anglo-Saxon," or "Celtic," discouragement follows, and the thing remains a name only, and sometimes never anything more to the end of life. Well, in these pages will be found some at least of these "names" in literature, with the living story itself to explain them; and I think you will all agree that the men of those distant days knew how to tell a rousing tale of adventure, or a mystic tale of faery, quite as well as, if not better than, the writers of to-day.

Last of all, a word about the sources of these tales. The "Cattle Raid of Cooley" belongs to a period of Celtic literature just before and just after the Christian era. It was not written down till the sixth century, and it breathes the simplicity, as well as the primitive passion, of early times. For in those days, when wealth consisted in flocks and herds, the stealing of a fine bull was enough to send two districts of a country to open war. Then comes "Beowulf," composed probably before the English appeared upon our shores in their longboats, but "edited" by a Christian writer somewhere about the eighth century A.D. It is mainly about the Geats, or Goths, but the description of the scenery is so English that some people think that the poet, the "scop," had in mind the "windy nesses" of Whitby and the "meres" of Northumberland. The "Children of Lir," with its pathetic touch, takes us back to the days of rich myth and folklore. It also was probably "worked up" by

a Christian monk, who introduces with great effect the beginnings of Christianity in Ireland. "Cynewulf and Cyneherd" is the very earliest piece of English prose in the language; it gives a good idea of the fighting instincts and loyalty of those days. The hand of Alfred, our "scholar-king," is seen in the translations of Bede's History, which gives us the quiet story of "Caedmon," our earliest poet; and he wrote the "Voyage of Ohthere," interesting because it was probably written down from the lips of the voyager himself.

The "Fight of Brihtnoth" is a stirring poem of a battle such as English boys would glory to be in the thick of; and "Cuthbert" gives a pretty legend of the days of Alfred, from the "Life of St Cuthbert."

Then we have several tales from the "Mabinogion," a collection of stories made expressly for children (for that is what the long word means), all full of that charm of mystery and magic which is the chief characteristic of Celtic literature, and forming a distinct contrast to the burly matter-of-fact adventures of the next group of tales. Of these Celtic stories the "Tale of Taliesin" was, perhaps, the greatest favourite in the Middle Ages; and you will find that most of the others have some connection with King Arthur, the hero of Celtic romance. "Olger the Dane" really belongs to this group, for it is certainly Celtic in origin, though it appears at the end of the Norman-French epic of "Charlemagne"; and "King Fortager" belongs to the "Merlin" cycle of tales—all closely connected with the story of King Arthur and his knights. Now we come to a set more typically English. The adventures of "Richard Lion-Heart," "Havelok the Dane," "Guy of Warwick," "Sir Bevis," and "Sir

Isumbras" are all concerned with sturdy English or Danish heroes, most of whom win undying glory on the battlefield. Fighting is here the dominant note, as was "mystery" in the Celtic stories. "Sir Gawaine" and "Sir Cleges," though also English in origin, are touched with Celtic magic; and the "Heir of Linne" is an old ballad from the delightful collection of ballad literature known as "Percy's Reliques."

I have included a few Old English poems, translated by the Rev. Stopford A. Brooke, M.A., who has shown us the original form, while keeping so wonderfully close to the spirit of the old poetry. These will make clear the essential marks of Old English poetry—the alliteration and accented rhythm in place of rhyme—as well as other characteristics.

I would like also to remind those boys and girls who are fond of history that nothing shows us the actual life of those old days better than these stories, often contemporary with the days of which they tell; and, since these tales are arranged here roughly in chronological order, they will serve as a kind of continuous view of English and Celtic social life and manners up to the fifteenth century.

And, last of all, I hope very sincerely that you may all enjoy reading these tales with as much pleasure as I have found in retelling them.

E. M. W.-B.

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The Tale of the White-Horned ; or The Cattle Raid of Cooley

MEAV, Queen of Connaught, was one of the richest and most fortunate queens that Ireland has ever known. Her husband, a king's son, also had great possessions, and ruled with her very happily over the land of Connaught.

In those days husbands and wives did not join their property together and hold it in common, but each kept what had belonged to them before marriage, and added to it as the years went on. So it came to pass that one day Queen Meav and her husband had a great argument as to which of them was the richer, and they resolved to produce and compare their treasures one against the other. First were brought to them all their vessels used for washing, eating, and drinking. Some were of wood, some of silver, and some of gold ; but they each found that what they had were exactly equal in value. Then were brought their finger-rings, clasps, bracelets, thumb-rings, necklets, and diadems of gold ; but they also were equal in value.

Their garments were brought : crimson and blue and black and yellow and white and streaked cloths were spread before each ; but they too were equal.

Then were brought their flocks of sheep, their horses

from the pastures. Great herds of pigs were driven up from the depths of forest glens, and droves of cows from the woods and mountains in the far borders of the province. Still all were equal. At length there was found among the King's herds a splendid young bull, which could not be matched for beauty among all the oxen of the Queen. He was of immense size, and his great head tossed and flashed in the sunlight, and all men called him the White-Horned.

The Queen was much vexed to find that the King had beaten her in their contest, so she sent for her cousin, Mac Roth, and said to him :

" Where, O cousin, in all the five provinces of Erin can I find a bull to match the White-Horned ? "

" I know of one," answered Mac Roth—" a better one still, called the Brown Bull of Cooley—but it belongs to Daré of Cooley, in Ulster, and I know not whether he will let it go."

" Go," said the Queen, " ask Daré to lend me the bull for a year, and I will send it back with fifty heifers as well. And if the men of Cooley object to losing their bull from the land, let Daré bring it me himself, and I will give him as much land, and as fine, as he now holds, and a chariot worth sixty-three cows, and will take him into my royal favour for the rest of his life."

So Mac Roth went on his errand to Daré with nine of his followers, and, having reached the country of the Brown Bull, was hospitably received by his master. The story was told him, and when he heard how much the matter meant to Queen Meav, he agreed to give it to them and to accept the terms she offered. Then, as night approached, he ordered that food should be set before

them, and that they should be well entertained for the night. But as the nine messengers sat together, drinking and chattering, they began to talk in boastful words about the matter in hand. One of them said that he marvelled that Daré should give to nine friendly men the Brown Bull, which the four provinces of Erin could not have taken by force out of Ulster. Another said, with a jeer, that Daré had done well to do so, and that little thanks were due to him, for if he had not given it willingly, Queen Meav would quickly have taken it by force. At that moment Daré's steward entered, bringing some fresh food, but when he heard this boast, he threw the meat on the ground, and told his master what had just been said. Then Daré was very wroth, and declared that these rude men and their Queen should never have the Brown Bull at all.

So the messengers returned to Meav, and told her all. Then the Queen raised a great army, and together with her husband and her daughter, who was named the Fair-browed, she marched against the men of Ulster.

Now, it so happened that at this time the men of Ulster, because of some wicked deeds done many years before, lay under a curse. This meant that none of them had any strength in their limbs, so that they could not hold a weapon or go out to the battle. The only one who had escaped was the hero Cuchulain, who dwelt upon the very borders of Ulster, and in the midst of whose domain was the dwelling-place of Daré, master of the Brown Bull. Cuchulain, then, was the only man in Ulster to face the invaders, which he did with great boldness, challenging them all to single combat.

So they agreed that no advance should be made into

the land till Cuchulain had been conquered; but day after day passed, and every man fought in turn, and still the champion of Ulster was the victor.

At length Queen Meav would wait no longer; she broke the compact, ravaged Ulster with fire and sword, and, having seized the Brown Bull, marched back again to her own land.

But before the army could reach their own land the curse came to an end, and the men of Ulster, wild with rage at this invasion, took up arms, pursued the cattle plunderers, and, having beaten them in fair fight, drove them helter-skelter across the River Shannon. But they did not recover the Brown Bull, since Queen Meav had taken care to send him on beforehand to the palace.

Now, when the Brown Bull of Cooley found himself in a strange country and among strange cattle, he set up such a bellowing as had never before been heard in the land of Erin. And when White-Horned, the King's bull, heard those sounds, he knew that some strange foe had come against him, and rushed out to battle with the bellower. They met in a wide valley among the mountains, and the sight of one another was the signal for a terrific fight The whole province rang with the roars of the two bulls. The sky was darkened with the sods of earth thrown up by their hoofs and horns, and the foam of their mouths was like thick clouds of snow. Men, women, and children, faint of heart at such a sight, hid themselves in caves; only the very boldest dared to look on afar from the tops of the neighbouring hills.

At length the Brown Bull began bit by bit to prevail, and the White-Horned turned, and fled. He rushed through a mountain pass where sixteen warriors were

standing to view the fight, and not only killed and trampled them underfoot, but buried them several feet below the ground through the force of his own hoofs and of the bull that pursued him.

Over hill and dale they ran, till at last the Brown Bull overtook the White-Horned, raised him up on his horns, and so ran off with him. Past the gates of the palace of Meav he ran, tossing his enemy in the air, until at last the White-Horned was tossed and shaken to pieces. And everywhere a limb of the bull fell, there its name remained for ever. And this is the reason why Ath Mor, which means the Great Ford, was called from that day Athlone (or Ath*loin*), for the great loin of the White-Horned fell upon that spot when his enemy passed by. At last, when the Brown Bull had shaken the White-Horned limb by limb from his horns, he returned to his own country so furious that everyone fled at his approach. Soon there would have been not a man left in Ulster ; but as the bull faced towards his own home, the people of the village hid behind a great rock, which he in his mad rage mistook for another bull, and, butting against it with all his force, he dashed out his brains, and died.

So neither the Queen nor the King were any the better for this " Cattle Raid of Cooley," and they never had a contest of the kind again.

From the " Cattle Spoil of Chuailgné," one of the oldest relics of Gaelic literature, written down possibly about the year 580.

The Story of Beowulf

I. BEOWULF AND GRENDEL

THREE mighty kings had the Danes had in bygone years; their names were Scef and Scyld and Beowulf.

Scef came from the sea, and no man knew his fatherland. He came as a babe, floating in a boat upon the waters, and at his head was a sheaf of corn. He was sent for the comfort of the people, because they had no king. He overthrew the might of the foemen, and gave peace to the people, and then passed away.

After Scef came Scyld, the son of Scef, a prince strong in warfare, wise in counsel, generous in giving treasure. When Scyld grew old and weak, and the time drew near that he was to sleep his last sleep, he bade them carry him to the seashore.

Thither his people carried him, with grief in their hearts, and laid him in the lap of a warship filled with treasures of gold and ornaments, with battle-axes, bills and spears, and chain armour; and on his breast they laid rich offerings of jewels and precious stones. A golden flag was set up over his head, and thereupon they unfurled the sails, and let the wind bear the ship where it would over the wide sea. So over the water, and alone, departed Scyld, even as Scef his father had come. But he sailed

away over the water, even as a king in the track of the wild swans, with his battle spoils at his right hand; and so he passed from the land. Of his race was Beowulf, a beloved chieftain, strong of hand. He too gave the people peace, and then passed away. After those days the people chose Healfdene for their leader, and when he died, at a good ripe age, his son Hrothgar reigned in his stead. Good fortune and prosperity followed in the steps of Hrothgar, and under him the Danes became a powerful and wealthy people.

So it came to pass that Hrothgar had it in mind to build a great mead-hall in his city, a palace wherein his men-at-arms might feast after their warfare and rejoice in the good things of this life. Very fair was this mead-hall, with high pinnacles and well-fashioned arches; and it was named Heorot—the Heart Hall—that all might know it to be the heart and centre of the land. It was opened with a great banquet, with sound of harp and song, and giving of rings and treasure to the men of valour, so that all the people rejoiced and swore fealty to him. Then was the heart of Hrothgar lifted up with pride, because of the mead-hall Heorot which he had built.

Far away in the fens which surrounded that place of joy lived an evil spirit, grim and terrible, named Grendel, whose home was in the dark and fenny wastes of marsh-land.

He watched this noble palace being built, and his heart was full of anger, because he saw that it made the people of one mind under their lord. One night he crept up to the mead-hall where the nobles and thanes were sleeping after their feast, regardless of harm and ill. Softly he

entered, and, gripping hold of thirty weary men with his gigantic arms, he carried them off to his lair, there to devour them at his leisure. When morning came, the Danes, awaking in the dim light, saw the tracks of the evil spirit, and mourned bitterly for the loss of their relations, for they knew too well that mortal strength availed for naught against such an enemy.

The next night the fiend came again on his grisly errand, and more were snatched away ; and for twelve years he did the like, until the houses of the land were empty because of the death-dealing of the ogre of the marshes.

Warriors and counsellors were swept away, and none could stay the destruction. The aged King Hrothgar grew grey and bent with grief for the loss of his brave followers. Night after night he sat keeping watch in the mead-hall among his vassals, but though men were snatched away from every side of him, yet Grendel could never touch him on his throne of state. Then Hrothgar grew weary of his life ; and when men came to him for counsel he answered nothing, but sat bowed in grief, his hoary head resting on his arms, and the people prayed in vain for a deliverer from the slayer of their countrymen.

Away to the westward among the people of the Geats lived a mighty thane named Beowulf, tall, and strongest of his race, and kinsman to Hygelac, chief of the Geats.

This young warrior heard of the deeds of Grendel and of the troubles of Hrothgar, and resolved to go to his aid. So he sought out a band of fourteen warriors, his favourite companions, and went on board a ship to seek the land of the Danes across the sea. Like a bird the vessel, with prow like the neck of a swan, flitted across the sea-path,

until at length the adventurers reached the windy cliffs and steep hills of the Danish shore.

Scarcely had they landed when the Warden of the Shore rode down to the beach to learn what they had come for. "Who are you," he cried, "bearing arms and wearing coats of mail, who have come over the watery highway? Long time have I kept the coast, but never yet saw I men more openly attempting to land here. You know not even the password of our warriors, the token of kinsmen. True, I never have seen a finer warrior than one who stands among you, but yet I am bound to know from whence you come, before I let you proceed farther into the land of the Danes."

Then Beowulf answered: "We are men of the race of the Geats, hearth-fellows of Hygelac. With friendly intent have we come to visit your lord, the guardian of his people, so be thou good to us, and help us on our way. We have a great message for the prince of the Danes. Away in our land we have heard of a strange and terrible visitor of darkness who has wrought havoc among your countrymen, and for this have we brought a remedy. Do you bring us on our way to Heorot with all the speed you can."

Then they proceeded on their march. Their armour gleamed, and the ring-iron of their trappings rang merrily as they tramped into the palace of Heorot. Weary with their journey, the men were glad to lay aside their broad shields against the outer wall, and to pile their javelins in a heap before they entered. To them came out a herald, who bade them say whence and why they came; to which Beowulf replied: "We are Hygelac's hearth-fellows. To the prince of this land, the illustrious

Hrothgar, alone will I expound my errand." Then the herald returned to where Hrothgar sat, old and hoary, among his earls ; and he prayed him that he would give audience to the stranger-men, and to their chief, whose name was Beowulf. And when Hrothgar heard that name he exclaimed : "Beowulf ! I knew him when he was a boy—he has the strength of thirty men in his hand-grip. Bring him in hither with his men, and say they are welcome visitors to our land." So Beowulf entered, and thus accosted him : "Hail, O King Hrothgar ! Hygelac's thane am I and his hearth-comrade. Many a time by night and day have I fought against evil ones by sea and land, and now am I come to deliver the brave Danes from their peril, to fight against Grendel the Ogre. And since no weapon will avail against him I will not bear sword, or broad shield, or yellow buckler to the conflict, but with hand-grips will encounter the foe. And if he bear away my dead body with intent to devour it in the grisly moor swamps, why, 'twill but spare the trouble of my burial ! But send to Hygelac the matchless armour which Wayland the Smith forged to protect my breast, and cease to grieve for me. Fate goeth ever as it must."

Then Hrothgar answered, and said : "Well indeed, O Beowulf, do I know of the courage and might that dwells within your handclasp. But you know not how terrible is this Grendel. Oft have my hardy warriors, fierce over their ale-cups at nightfall, promised to await the onset of Grendel with clash of swords, and as oft, in the morning, the benches and floor of this mead-hall have reeked with their blood. Yet be it as thou wilt, and ere nightfall comes, and the dreaded Grendel enters

to choose his prey, I bid you sit down to banquet, and merrily share the feast with thy fellows, while by old custom we incite each other to a brave and careless mind."

Then were the benches cleared, and Beowulf and the Geats sat at banquet with the Danes, while the twisted ale-cup went merrily round.

Now there was one of those who sat at the feet of Hrothgar, Unferth by name, who looked with a jealous eye on the new-comer, grudging that any man should do greater deeds than himself. So he said scoffingly: "Are you that Beowulf who strove with Breca on the open sea in a swimming match, when you two out of bravado explored the floods and risked your lives in deep waters? For a week, 'tis said, you toiled in the surge; but he outdid you in swimming, and came at length to his own land. All his boast to thee did Breca fulfil; wherefore I look for ill luck for you if you dare bide in Grendel's way for the space of a night."

Then Beowulf answered: "Big things have you spoken, O Unferth, about this adventure with Breca. But I claim rightly to have shown more sea-power, more buffeting by the waves, than any other man.

"True it is that we, when boys, tried a contest of swimming. Drawn swords we had as we plied along, to protect us from the whales. No farther could Breca swim than I, and, seeing him fail, I would not leave him. So we kept together in the sea for five nights and days till the flood parted us—icy weather, dark night, and a fierce wind from the north. Then was the temper of the sea-fishes stirred. A spotted monster dragged me to the bottom, and it would have gone ill with me but for the protection of my coat of mail. But I got at the

monster with my knife, and in the end despatched the mighty sea-brute.

"Then many another beast attacked me; but it was not fated that they should devour me for their supper on the floor of the sea; on the other hand, next morning they lay dead and stiff in the track of the sea-wave, and so I escaped, weary and worn, from their grips. The sea cast me upon the land of the Finns, and so I arrived home. But never yet did Breca or anyone else kill nine sea-monsters such as they; and to you, Unferth, this I say in good truth: Never would Grendel have made such a tale of horrors for your prince here, if your courage were what you claim it to be.

"For Grendel has found out that he need not fear much from you and yours; he makes a sport of war, slaughters, and feasts himself; but now shall he learn a different lesson from the warlike Geats."

Then Hrothgar rejoiced when he perceived the resolute purpose that was in Beowulf. His mighty men laughed with joy, and the noise of harp and song resounded through the hall. Presently there entered to them Wealtheow, Hrothgar's Queen, who, in her gold array, greeted the new-comers. According to custom, she took the jewelled beaker, and presented it first to her sovereign lord, then to all the rest in turn, until at length she brought it to Beowulf, the mighty chief, and greeted him with wise words as the champion of her people. And Beowulf took the cup from Wealtheow's hands, and said: "No more shall Grendel prey upon the valiant Danes till he has felt the might of my fingers." So all the people were glad at his words, and rejoiced over their wine-cups. By this time it had grown dark, and they began to recall the fact

that the monster was hovering near. So Hrothgar and his hearth-fellows arose, and went out one by one, leaving the hall, now dim with the shades of night, to the protection of Beowulf.

Then Beowulf began to laugh at the fears of the company who had left the hall, and took off his helmet, his sword, and the rest of his armour, giving them to his squire, with these valiant words: "No less a fighter am I than Grendel, therefore I will not kill him with my sword. Naught knows he of sword cuts or how to use the shield, so when we meet in the night-time it shall be without weapons on both sides."

Then all lay down upon the ground, and soon all, save one, were sound asleep.

Then from the misty depths of the moor came Grendel, full of wrath, and thirsting for his prey.

The door of the hall, though fastened with bars of wrought iron, sprang open as soon as he touched it with his hands, and in a moment he was treading the pavement of the inner room. Flames darted from his eyes as he looked around, and he laughed aloud when he saw asleep before him so goodly a company of men. One of the sleeping warriors he seized, and in a moment tore him to pieces, crunched his bones, drank his blood, and devoured his whole body.

Next he spied Beowulf, lying upon a raised bed, and put forth his hand to take him. But his hand and arm were promptly seized in such a grip as had never before been felt by him. He tried to free himself, to escape, to break out again into the darkness, but in vain; for Beowulf was now upon his feet and at deadly grips with the monster. The men, both those in the hall and those in

the castle, hearing the roar and din, awoke, and stood aghast at the sight of the conflict. To and fro swayed the twain, wrecking the benches, and raising such a noise that hardly did the hall stand firm.

Then the followers of Beowulf snatched up their swords, and ran to the help of their master. But, though they did not know it, not the choicest blade on earth nor the finest war axe would hurt the monster, for he had by enchantment made himself safe against the edges of all weapons.

So between him and Beowulf the battle raged, and so strong was the warrior's grip that he tore off the arm of the monster before Grendel was able to escape from Heorot.

Then Beowulf in triumph hung up the arm as a trophy from the roof of Heorot, and when the morning dawned all the people gathered together from far and wide to hear the story of the downfall of Grendel. Then many of the warriors set out to follow his track across the moor, and traced him to the shore of the Mere. There they found the water all surging with his life-blood, and so rode back, rejoicing in his death, to Heorot.

Within the hall, meantime, Hrothgar was making a stately speech of thanks to Beowulf, who answered modestly that he had not stuck closely enough to the monster or he would have killed him there and then, and prevented his escape. But he pointed to the hanging arm, with its nails like spurs, saying that, though the monster had gone forth into the night, it was only to die.

Then a great feast was made in honour of the event, at which Hrothgar presented to Beowulf a golden flag, richly decorated, a helmet and coat of mail, and a splendid sword, the hilt inlaid with jewels and with gold. When

these had been presented, eight beautiful horses were led into the court, and the King's own war saddle, decorated with silver, was placed upon the back of the foremost, a noble charger, and all together were handed over to Beowulf, as a mark of gratitude from the King for freeing Heorot from the horror of Grendel.

So once again the hall resounded with joyous songs, and when night approached, each warrior went to his rest lighter of heart than of old.

II. THE VENGEANCE OF GRENDEL'S MOTHER

The last story told us how the noble Beowulf caused the downfall of the monster Grendel. This one goes on to describe a yet more terrible fight waged by that mighty hero with the powers of Darkness.

Down amid the cold waters of the Mere dwelt a wicked troll-wife, the mother of the monster, and when night fell this terrible hag approached the hall of Heorot, breathing vengeance for the loss of Grendel. Just when the warriors least expected harm, and when most of them were happily asleep, she burst into their midst, and, seizing one of the young noblemen who followed Heothgar, crushed him in her grip with one hand, while with the other she tore down the arm of Grendel from the roof, and escaped hurriedly back to the fen.

Now this night Beowulf had not slept in Heorot, a more comfortable lodging having been prepared for him elsewhere. When Hrothgar heard the dreadful news of the cruel end of one of his favourite young warriors, he asked that Beowulf should come to him, and then, in the early dawn,

he poured out the sad story before him. Beowulf listened in silence, until the King spoke of his great wish that the chieftain would undertake to find the wicked troll-wife, who with her son had been known for years to haunt the moorland, watching for those whom she might devour.

Then Beowulf answered cheerily: "Sorrow not, my wise lord. Better it is for every man that he should avenge his friend than that he should greatly mourn. Death must come to all, so let him who has the chance seek glory before his end comes. As for my task, let the monster go where she will, I promise you she shall not escape me."

So he set off with a few warriors across the moor, following the tracks of blood left only too clearly upon it. By lonely paths and steep stone banks they travelled, until at length they came to a gloomy wood, whose trees overhung a grey pile of rocks, and beneath this lay a great stretch of water, dark and troubled. A thrill of horror seized each brave warrior as he looked, for on the brink of the cliff lay the head of their companion whom the troll-wife had carried off, and the Mere was seething with blood.

While Beowulf was girding on his armour, the troop of warriors sat down on the rocks, and watched the grim goblin creatures who swam in the waters, or gambolled at the edge of the Mere. When their chief was ready he took his famous sword, Hrunting by name, which had done good work in bygone days, and, waving farewell, plunged into the eddying waters.

When the grisly goblins who haunted the regions of the deep saw that one of the sons of men was exploring their watery home, they rushed to attack him. But foremost

came that evil hag whom he sought for, and, gripping him in her iron clutches, would have crushed his bones had not his coat of mail withstood her grasp. Yet he was powerless, and was borne away to her dread mansion; while a pursuing crowd of monsters harassed him, and battered on his war helmet with their tusks.

At length Beowulf perceived that he stood in a strange and gloomy hall, into which no water could enter, although it lay beneath the waves. By a dim gleam of firelight he saw himself confronted by the troll-wife, a creature half wolf, half goblin. Rushing upon her with his famous sword he struck with all his might, but, alas! the sharp edge turned aside as though it were a leaf, for, like her son, she was proof against all human weapons.

Then Beowulf flung the sword aside, and gripped the troll-wife with his hands. Once she sank to the ground, but it was only in order to grapple with him more strongly, and at length, utterly exhausted, he fell prostrate to the earth. Uttering a fiendish yell the hag threw herself upon him with her great blood-stained knife, and stabbed him with all her might; but the breast net, of interlaced steel, interposed, and turned the point aside, and as she lay spent with the force of the blow Beowulf staggered to his feet.

As he did so his eyes fell upon a pile of armour, wrought by giants and goblins in olden days. From this he snatched a sword so huge that no other man could wield it, and smote, in despair of his life, with such effect that the troll-wife dropped dead upon the ground.

Immediately the glimmer of light shot up, and filled the place as though with sunshine. Fiercely swinging his sword Beowulf explored the hall, and ere long came

upon the body of Grendel, whose head he forthwith cut off.

Meantime his absence had lasted for so long that the warriors on the brink had become extremely troubled about him. Presently, as they watched, they saw the waters redden with blood, and most of them at once concluded that the troll-wife had torn their leader in pieces. Therefore, as it grew late, the followers of Hrothgar gave him up for lost, and returned to Heorot ; but his own men sat sadly by the reddening waves, thinking of their beloved leader.

While they thus mourned for him, Beowulf, whose magic sword had melted away in his hand when touched by the blood of Grendel, was swimming upward, through depths now clear and purified; for the goblins had fled for ever when they saw the fall of the monsters who had ruled them.

With glad hearts and hands did his followers help the hero to land, and shouts of joy they gave as they perceived the head of Grendel.

To Heorot then they hastened ; and that grim head, together with the hilt of the magic sword, was brought before Hrothgar as he sat at table, as trophies of what Beowulf had done.

Then the joy of Hrothgar knew no bounds, and after loading the hero with rewards and thanks, he ordered a fresh banquet for him and his followers ; after which Beowulf, tired out, asked for nothing but his couch. There he slept till the voice of the birds proclaimed the sunrise, and then prepared to return to his own land.

Sad was the parting with Hrothgar, who was loth to let him go, and whose gifts were so many that his bounty

was long talked of when they were far from the Hall of Heorot.

III. THE FIGHT WITH THE FIRE DRAGON

For many a long year after his fight with the monsters of the Mere did Beowulf rule his kingdom wisely and well; but when he was quite an old man a dreadful event stirred up the countryside, and caused him once again to call for his sword and armour.

On a lonely heath in one part of his kingdom stood a great pile of stones, overhanging a path by which no man dared to go, for the story was told that a fierce dragon lived in that rocky pile, guarding a treasure. One day, however, a certain man had offended his chieftain so sorely that he found himself, homeless and bruised with many blows, a wanderer upon this lonely heath. Stumbling on his way, and careless of what befell him, he climbed upon a rocky cliff, and, seeking shelter among the boulders, came suddenly upon a gleam of gold. He looked farther, and there, half hidden by the stones, he saw the entrance to a cave all glittering with golden treasure.

Just inside the mouth of the cave a Fire Dragon lay in a deep, deep sleep. He had guarded this treasure for three hundred years, and very seldom slept, but when he did he slept very soundly.

The outcast crept in, and snatching a tankard—that is to say, a great cup—ornamented with golden pictures, he fled away over the heath, and brought it to his chieftain, begging for forgiveness and kind treatment if, in return, he

told him his discovery. The petition was granted, and on hearing the news his lord hastened with a band of followers to the place. The dragon still slept, and before he awoke they had carried off a vast store of gold and jewels.

Now when the dragon awoke he was very wroth. He sniffed the scent of his unwelcome visitors, and began to search closely through the desert waste. Every now and then he would dash back into the cavern, to see if it were really true that the treasure had gone. But when evening came he delayed no longer, but hastened forth filled with fiery rage. He surrounded the farmsteads with his hot breath, so that the flames of roof and barn filled the air, and, advancing upon the hall of Beowulf himself, he spirted fire upon it, so that the very walls began to melt away. Then, as daylight was breaking, he hurried to his own dark cave.

When this crushing news was told to Beowulf he was filled with thoughts of revenge, and at once gave orders that they should make for him an iron war shield, as strong as possible, for well he knew that no shield of wood could help him against his enemy's fiery breath. Yet he would not deign to show fear before him, so he went forth alone to the meeting, leaving all but a few of his followers behind. But first the whole story of the stolen treasure had been told him, and the precious cup had been placed in his hands. So the man who by his rash deed had first begun the quarrel, was forced, much against his will, to show Beowulf the way. When they came within sight of the place, he bade farewell to his guide and to those who had brought him on his way, bidding them await him on the hillside, ready armed, to see the result of the conflict.

So on he went, and presently came to an arch of rocks, through which flowed a stream, hot and steamy with the dragon's breath. Then Beowulf gave a great shout, and out rushed the dragon from his cavern. Bent like a bow, he came shuffling along in headlong fashion, and flung himself upon the King, who defended himself bravely with his shield until his chance came. Then, swinging up his arm, he smote the monster with his great sword; but the brown edge turned upon the hard skin, and Beowulf became hard pressed. Nearer and nearer came the dragon, casting forth devouring fire from his mouth, and showers of sparks fell round him.

The followers of Beowulf had eagerly watched the conflict from a distance, and now, seeing how badly it fared with their brave lord, they began to tremble for their own lives, and so slunk away into a wood near by. But one of them, a youth named Wiglaf, a cousin of the King, said boldly that it was a shameful thing that they should carry back their shields unmarked, and that their lord should fall alone in the fight; and so, leaving them, he rushed to where, in the midst of a cloud of black smoke, his kinsman and the dragon were in deadly conflict. He shouted a word of encouragement to Beowulf, and scarcely had he finished speaking when the monster turned upon him. His shield was consumed by the waves of flame, his coat of mail was useless against it, and he was driven to fight under protection of the King's shield. Encouraged by his presence Beowulf struck a mighty blow, so that his weapon stood fixed in the dragon's head, and then flew into splinters. This so enraged the monster that he rushed upon the hero with such force that he bore him to the ground, and fixed his teeth in his

neck, wounding him very sorely. But Wiglaf lifted his trusty sword, and smote the dragon, and pierced him, so that from that moment the fire grew less, and the beast began to draw away. Then the King recovered himself, drew his war knife, and dealt the dragon his death blow.

But Beowulf himself was very sorely wounded, for the poisoned teeth of the dragon had caused the bites to inflame and swell. In vain did Wiglaf loosen the King's helmet and dash water upon his face ; he knew the end was near at hand. Then Beowulf bade him enter the cavern and bring him word of what he saw.

A strange place it was, built by the dwarfs in olden times, and full of the treasures of kings long dead and gone. It was lighted by the gleam of a wonderful golden banner, which hung from the roof, and showed him stores of jewels, ancient armour, bracelets, and richly ornamented cups. Hastily gathering as much as he could carry in his arms, Wiglaf hastened back, only to find his dear lord at the point of death. Looking upon the pile of treasure, he thanked God with a feeble voice that he had been permitted to give his life for what would provide for the needs of all his followers, and giving to Wiglaf his golden collar, helmet, and breastplate, he said : " Thou art the last of my race ; all my kinsmen, chivalrous princes that they were, have passed into eternity ; I must follow after them."

Thus the brave Beowulf yielded up his life.

Presently came the nobles who had deserted him in time of need, and found Wiglaf refreshing his parched lips with water and weeping over his dead prince. Then bitterly did Wiglaf address them, saying : " Brave warriors indeed ! Now that the fight is over, have you indeed sum-

moned courage to come and share the treasure—you who forsook your treasure-giver, your noble prince, to whom you owe the very war trappings in which you stand? I tell you that, though you shall see the treasure and hold it in your own hands, yet it shall never profit you or yours. The Swedes who came from over the sea, who slew Hygelac, the same that Beowulf drove from the land, will come again when they know that our hero is dead, will snatch the treasure from your weak grasp, and carry you away into bondage along with it. Let it be his who won it. He will guard it safer in his sleep than you with feeble war blades and weak javelins.

"Let the lord of the Geats slumber with it in the cairn which we shall build for him, and then shall men fear to touch the treasure, as they would to snatch a sleeping lion's prey."

So the troop arose, and went joylessly under the Eagle's Crag, and found there on the sand the lifeless body of their great prince; and hard by lay that grisly dragon, full fifty feet long, who so long had been the terror of the night, though by day he had returned to contemplate his hoard.

Then did the people of the Geats prepare for Beowulf a mighty funeral pile, hung round with helmets, with shields and breastplates, and with bitter tears they laid their lord upon the wood. Eight picked warriors walked with Wiglaf round the pile with torches to kindle the fire. The reek of the smoke rose high in the air, and the sound of a mourning people mingled with the crackling of the blaze, and the wind fanned the flames until they had consumed the body of the mighty-handed chief.

Then did the men build a great cairn beside the sea.

High it was, and broad, and easy to be seen by the sailors over the waves. Ten days they worked at it, and built up a beacon vast and tall, and laid the ashes of their lord within. And they carried thither all the hoarded treasure —rings and gems and ornaments of gold—and laid them within the mound. Never did earl wear the twisted gold, nor was maiden gladdened with the gold rings about her neck ; the treasure sleeps fast in the earth beneath him who won it.

Twelve nobles rode about the mound, recording in speech and song the glory of their King—even as it is meet that a man should praise his lord and love him in his soul after his body has vanished away and only his deeds remain.

From the Epic of Beowulf, the oldest of Old English epics. About 700-800 A.D.

The Children of Lir

LIR, a powerful Irish chieftain, had married the eldest of three beautiful maidens, and in course of time they had four fair children—a daughter and three sons. Sad to say, the mother died when they were still very young ; and Lir married again. His new wife, who was named Eva, was also very beautiful, but, though no one knew it, she was a very wicked sorceress. She could not bear to see her husband go to fondle and play with his children, and at last she determined to do away with them altogether. So one day she enticed them to a lonely spot among the mountains, near a smooth lake, and, leaving them to play together, she tried to bribe her servants to put them to death. But they would not, and so she returned to them determined to do the deed herself. Now, when she reached the spot, and saw how fair they looked as they ran races about the valley, her heart failed her, and she could not do this wicked thing. But she was determined that they should not return to their father Lir, so she called to her an ancient Druid who lived in a cave near that spot, and persuaded him to use his enchantment to obtain her wish. When the Druid had advised her what to do, she called the little ones to her, and said to them : "Children dear, how warm you are with your running ! Come and let

me bathe you in Lake Dairbreak, that you may be cool and refreshed."

The children were delighted to do so, and were soon splashing about in the clear water, but no sooner had the water covered them than by the magic spells of Eva and the Druid they were all four changed into swans.

"Birds shall ye be," chanted the Druid from the bank as the change took place, "until, long ages hence, ye hear the voice of a Christian bell."

So the four beautiful milk-white swans swam sadly away over the smooth water; and when the cruel Eva saw what she had done, she feared to face her husband, and repented bitterly of her evil deed. But it was too late. All she could do was to grant to the birds the use of their native speech, their human reason, and the power of singing plaintive fairy music, so sweet that those who heard it should be soothed and calmed, however sad and angry they had been before.

A terrible punishment overtook their wicked persecutor. When the King of that country heard of her cruel deed, he sent for her, and asked: "What shape of all others on the earth, or below the earth, or over the earth, do you most abhor?" She replied: "A demon of the air."

Then the King pronounced judgment on her: "A demon of the air shalt thou be till the end of time."

Meantime hundreds of years passed away, and still the beautiful swans swam up and down their lake and looked for deliverance. Sometimes they took flight, and entered the Western Sea, and sailed around the coast; but all Ireland was in heathen darkness, and never the sound of a Christian bell was heard.

The dwellers of those coast lands used to visit the shore in crowds to hear their sweet music and watch their graceful movements. But after a time they were caught by the strong current of Mull, and this drove the fair birds into the stormy seas between Erin and Alba. Here they endured many a woe; for sometimes they were separated from one another by the storm and darkness, and sometimes they were almost frozen to death in the icy floods. And so, tormented by the restless waves and the chill winds of winter, they waited for three hundred years. But one soft spring morning, when the ice-floes had drifted away and the wind sang gently over the mountains, as they floated along their own Lake Dairbreak, they heard the sound of a Christian bell. For St Patrick had come to Ireland with the glad Gospel news, and everywhere men were building churches, and hastening to fill them with worshippers.

So when the sound of the distant bell floated over the water, the spell was broken, and the Children of Lir returned to their own shapes. But they had lived so long that, after they had learnt the Christian faith, they were glad to lie down and rest for ever. They were all buried in the self-same tomb, and after their death men made songs about them; and every Irish boy and girl to this day loves to hear the story of the Swan-Children of Lir.

From the earliest mythological cycle of Celtic poems. No copy of it is found in writing till the early seventeenth century.

The Story of Cynewulf and Cyneherd

THIS story is found in the oldest history book ever written in English. It tells how a king of Wessex met his death at the hands of his enemy.

A certain man named Cynewulf had made himself King of Wessex by driving the wicked ruler Sigbright into the woods. There Sigbright was slain by a shepherd, who bore a grudge against him. And after he was dead, his brother, Prince Cyneherd, determined to rule in his stead.

He waited a while, and presently discovered that King Cynewulf, taking only a few soldiers with him, had gone to visit a lady who lived in the little town of Merton. So Cyneherd rode off to this place with all his retainers, and surrounded the house in which the King was sitting.

When King Cynewulf saw what they were about, he rushed to the door, and fought against them nobly, and struck the Prince down, and sorely wounded him.

But Prince Cyneherd's followers flung themselves upon the King, and overcame and slew him.

When the lady saw what was happening outside, she began to cry aloud; and the soldiers of the King, hearing her cries, came running up to see what was the matter.

When Prince Cyneherd saw the soldiers, he offered them money and their lives if they would join his side; but they

would not hear of it, and fought against him till all lay slain save one, and he was sorely wounded.

In the morning King Cynewulf's men whom he had left behind heard what was done and how the King was slain. Then they rode fast to that place, and found that the Prince had seized the town and locked the gates.

Scarcely had they begun to attack the town when Cyneherd came to them, promising to give them much money and land if they would own him as their King. He reminded them that many of their kinsfolk were on his side, and bade them make up their minds to join him also.

But they answered : " Dear are our kinsfolk to us, but none of them is as dear as our lord the King, and we will never follow his murderer." And they implored their kinsfolk to come out of the city, and to leave the Prince. But they would not, saying that they were bound to Cyneherd as much as their kinsmen were bound to the King, and they would not heed their words.

Then the King's men threw themselves upon the gates, so that they broke them down, and entered. And they fought against Cyneherd and his followers, and slew them, all save one, who managed to escape with his life, although he was very severely wounded.

In this way did the King's men keep their faith and avenge the death of their lord. And they buried Prince Cyneherd at Axminster, but King Cynewulf in the royal city of Winchester.

From the Saxon Chronicle. About 755 A.D.

The Voyage of Ohthere

THIS story was told by King Alfred, who relates what he heard from the lips of Ohthere, a whale fisher, whom he had sent to explore the unknown lands of the north, which we call Scandinavia.

Ohthere told his lord, King Alfred, that he had dwelt in a place farther north than any Northmen had ever lived—by the shore of the Western Sea. It was nothing but desert land in that part of the world, except where a few Finns, who hunted in winter and fished in summer, had their huts. He had sailed along the coast of this waste land farther north than any whale fisher had ever done, and had sailed inland up a great river, but not for a great distance, for fear of unfriendly inhabitants.

He visited this wild North Land for the sake of hunting the walrus, or "horse-whale" as he called it, which has very long teeth, some of which he brought home, and showed the King.

The skin of the walrus was used for ship-ropes, and in size it was said to be much smaller than the whale.

In that land a man was said to be rich if he owned many reindeer. At the time that Ohthere sought out the King, he was the owner of six hundred tame deer; and among them were six "decoy-deer," who were very precious, since they were used to catch

their companions in the wild, and bring them in to be tamed.

He told the King that he was one of the richest men in the land, for he owned more than twenty oxen and twenty sheep and twenty pigs; and if he wanted to plough, he ploughed with horses.

Money and taxes were paid in that land by means of deerskins, birds' feathers, walrus bones, "ship-ropes" made of walrus-skin, and seals. Every man paid taxes according to his rank. The highest in the land had to pay as a tax fifteen skins of martens, five of reindeer, one bearskin, ten measures of feathers, a cloak of bearskin or otterskin, and two ship-ropes.

He said also that the land of the Northmen was very long and narrow. The only part on which a man could plough or feed his cattle lay along the coast-line, and even that was very rocky in places. Wild moorlands lay to the east, facing the cultivated land, and in these parts dwelt Finns, who were for ever ravaging the fields which the Northmen had tilled, so that there was constant warfare between the two races.

From King Alfred's version of Orosius' World History. 880-900 A.D.

The Story of Alfred and Guthrum

THIS is a story of the troubled days when the Danish army was in England and no one could stand against it. But Alfred the King went on fighting for his people in Wessex even when there seemed no hope of victory; and sometimes he was successful, as you shall see.

Soon after Alfred became King, the Danish army stole secretly in mid-winter, about the season of Twelfth Night, into Wessex, and settled down there, driving many of the people over the sea.

Many others they caused to become their servants; and Alfred with a little troop escaped with difficulty to the woods and the hiding-places of the moors.

About Easter-tide King Alfred, with his little troop, made a fortress on the island of Athelney; and from this place he fought against the army in that part of Somerset in which his fortress lay. And when he was able, he rode forth to a place called Egbright's Stone, and many men from Somerset, and Wiltshire, and Hampshire, and the land on the other side of the sea, joined him there with great rejoicing.

And he went forth one night from the camp to Ethandune, and there attacked the whole of the Danish army, and put them to flight. After that he rode after them to

King Alfred launching a Galley

their fortress, and sat before it fourteen nights. Then they gave up hostages to him, and took many oaths of obedience, and promised also that their King should receive baptism. This they brought about; for three weeks later Guthrum, their King, came to him, with thirty of the worthiest men in the army, at Aller, near Athelney. And King Alfred received them, and had them baptised at Wedmore. They stayed twelve nights with the King, and he gave Guthrum and his companion gifts.

From the Saxon Chronicle. Before 900 A.D.

The Story of Caedmon the Herdsman Poet

THIS is one of the oldest true stories which Alfred the King wrote in English, for at first it was written in Latin by Bede, an old English scholar.

In the Abbey of Whitby lived a certain man named Caedmon, who used to look after the cattle, and who had grown old within the Abbey walls without ever being able to learn to sing a song or psalm. And this troubled him greatly, so that when he sat at meat with his companions, and a song was called for, and the harp was passed round to each in turn, he would rise up as he saw it coming near him, and go away from the table ashamed.

It so happened that one evening he left the feast for this reason, and went out to the cowshed, for he had charge of the cows that night. After his work was done, he lay down on the ground and slept, when suddenly he saw an angel standing by him, who called on him, and greeted him by name, saying: "Caedmon, sing me something." Then he answered, and said: "I cannot sing, and for that reason I left the feast and came out hither, because I know nothing of how to sing."

Yet again he who had spoken before said: "Nevertheless, you must sing to me."

" What shall I sing ? " he said ; and the Angel answered : " Sing to me the Creation."

Immediately Caedmon felt a power stirring within him, and he began to sing in praise of God Almighty in words which he had never heard before.

Then he awoke, and all the words that he had sung in his sleep he held fast in his mind, and very soon he had joined together many songs in honour of God. When the morning came he went to the chief man of that place, and told him what a gift he had received, and he led Caedmon to the Abbess, and told her the whole story.

Then the Abbess called together all the most learned men and their pupils, and bade Caedmon relate to them his dream, that they might give their opinions as to what his gift was and whence it came. Then was it clear to all that this heavenly gift had been sent him from the Lord, So they took him, and told him some holy stories from the Bible, and asked him, if he could, to turn them into musical songs ; and when he understood them he went home to his house, and came again in the morning, and sang them the most beautiful song, far better than they could have imagined.

These are the lines with which Caedmon began his great Poem of Creation :

> " Most right it is that we praise with our words,
> Love in our hearts, the Guardian of the Skies,
> Glorious King of all men ; He is Head of all
> His high Creation, the Almighty Lord."

When she heard his poetry, the Abbess much wished that he should leave worldly things alone, and become a monk, which he gladly did. And she brought him into

the Abbey, and told him many of the holy stories of the Bible; and he used to remember them and think them over, and then turn them into the sweetest songs. His songs were so winsome to hear that his teachers themselves used to learn them, and write them from his word of mouth.

When Caedmon was a very old man, and the time of his departure drew near, he was afflicted so little with bodily weakness that he could both speak and walk about. Now, it was the custom that all those who were ill or dying should be placed in one house that they might be nursed together.

The night before Caedmon died he bade his servant prepare a place for him in this house, that he might rest there. The servant wondered at his request, for no one thought that Caedmon's end was near; however, he did as he was ordered.

When all was ready Caedmon went to rest, but was so glad of heart, for some reason that others knew not, that he was talking and jesting with those in the house till after midnight. Then, very early in the morning, he asked that the Last Sacrament, the "Housel" as it was called in those days, might be given to him. Then those who were with him were surprised, and said: "What need is there of this? You were talking to us with a cheerful and glad heart only a few minutes ago."

But he asked for It again, and when he had received It, he asked them whether any one of them bore a grudge against him. Then they all answered that they loved him greatly, and that no one had ever borne a grudge against him.

Caedmon was very happy when he heard this, and told

them all how dearly he loved them. Then he asked whether it was the time for the Brethren of the Abbey to arise and teach God's people, and sing Matins, the first morning service. They told him the hour was not far off. Then said he: "Well, let us await that time"; and, having prayed, he laid his head upon his pillow, and fell asleep, and so, in sleeping, died.

So ended the life of this good and simple-hearted poet, who did God's will in such a gentle way that he himself was released from this life in gentle manner, and who had sung so many holy words of the love of his Saviour that his very last word was also of His praise.

From King Alfred's Translation of Bede's Ecclesiastical History. Before 900 A.D.

A Riddle of Cynewulf

(750-790 A.D.)

(*Translated by* Rev. STOPFORD A. BROOKE, M.A.)

VOICELESS is my robe when in villages I dwell,
When I fare the fields, or drive the flood along.
Whiles, my glorious garments and this lofty Lift
Heave me high above the housing place of heroes!
When the Craft of clouds carries me away
Far the folk above, then my fretted feathers
Loudly-rustling sound, lulling hum along,
Sing a sunbright song, when stayed to earth no more,
Over flood and field I'm a spirit faring far.

Answer—A swan.

Lift: air.
Craft: power.
fretted: costly.

The Story of the Fight of Brihtnoth

THIS is a story, first told in verse, of a fight between the Northmen and the English followers of Brihtnoth, a noble leader of the West Saxons, at Maldon in Essex. The Northmen, or Vikings as they are often called, had entered Essex, and, sailing up the River Blackwater, had pitched their camp upon the bank, and were greatly troubling the land.

When Brihtnoth knew this, he determined to do his utmost to drive the Northmen from the land. So he made ready his young warriors, and told each how he was to stand, and how to hold his round shield fast, and be affrighted at nothing. Then, with a band of his own special retainers, he went down to the river's brink.

On the other side of the river stood the herald of the Vikings, and this was the message he brought to Brihtnoth :

" The swift Men of the Sea have sent me to tell you this : You may buy your safety with money and golden bracelets—but let it be bought quickly. If you give us these at once we need not fight and slay you all, but instead will make a peace with you because of your gold, and will sail away in our ships."

Then Brihtnoth's mighty breast heaved with anger, and

he shook his ash stick at the herald, and made answer in these brave words :

" Hear thou, seafarer, what my people say to thee : They will buy their safety with spears, with sharp points, and well-tried swords. Tell your masters that an Earl with his army stands here to defend his own dear land against the enemy. Shame is it that you should sail away with our gold, and that we should never strike a blow ! There shall be hard fighting before we sell our lives."

Then Brihtnoth bade his men march down to the water's brink to meet the enemy, but before they could do this the tide came up—for the Blackwater was a tidal river—and prevented them. So they stood on either side, the throng of the East Saxons on one brink and the Northmen on the other, and none of them could reach the enemy except those who could reach them with their arrows.

At last the tide went out, and the foemen pressed near, very eager for the fight. Then Wulfstan, a brave young warrior, flung his javelin at the foremost man, and, stepping on to the narrow bridge, with two of his companions kept it against the foe. When the Northmen found that they could not displace them, they began to try to get the better of them by deceit, and asked if they might have leave to bring their troops over the water to the opposite side.

Then Brihtnoth, being in high spirits, gave them leave to do so, saying : " Come straightway over to us, for God alone knows who shall win this battle."

So the Vikings splashed through the water, for which they cared nothing, and found the host of Brihtnoth drawn up with their shields close, so as to form a wall.

Then the combat began, and very fiercely they fought on both sides; while javelins were flung, bows were busy, and the watchful ravens circled overhead.

At last, after he had killed many of the foemen, a dart flung by one of the enemy pierced Brihtnoth himself. A young boy named Wulfmer, who was standing by him, snatched out the spear, and flung it back again; but Brihtnoth sank to the ground exhausted. Then came up a wily fighting man to take from him his bracelets, his rings, and his robe, as a sign of having conquered him. But the old chieftain snatched out his sword, all stained with blood, and smote him on the breast, and so slew him.

Then the weapons fell from Brihtnoth's hands, and his strength went from him. So he called to his companions, and bade the youths fight bravely on, though he could not stand up with them any longer. And he thanked God for all his long and happy life, and so gave up his brave soul, and died; and Wulfmer was killed at his side.

Then a panic seized some of his followers; and one named Godric fled from the field, and, jumping on the back of the horse which stood waiting for Earl Brihtnoth, rode off with his two brothers to the shelter of the woods. And many others, when they saw their flight, forgot their duty to their good lord Brihtnoth, and also ran away.

But the young men who were his closest friends and followers drew together, determined either to die or to avenge their lord; and one of them named Alfwin, a very young warrior, cheered them, saying: "How many times we have heard bold speeches round the fire-side as we sat in comfort at home! Now is the chance to

show who is bold in deed, not only in word. For my part, I come of noble kinsmen, and it shall never be said of me that I left the battlefield and sought my home for safety, while my brave lord lay dead upon the battlefield."

Then another, named Offa, spoke up, and said: "We ought to fight all the better because Godric has so basely betrayed us; for many of our host, seeing Brihtnoth's horse galloping away, thought it was our dear lord who fled from the field."

Then all agreed that they would not think of flight, but would wipe out the disgrace that Godric had brought upon them, and avenge the death of their lord.

So the battle raged again. Many a brave man fell, and amongst them that bold seaman Offa, who had pledged his lord either to ride back home with him unhurt or to die in battle, lay dead by the side of Brihtnoth. Yet still the rest fought on, cheering their comrades with brave words, such as those of Brihtwold, an old soldier, who cried out:

"The mind shall be harder, the heart shall be keener, and the courage shall be bolder as our strength grows less. An old man am I, yet from hence will I not stir, but am hoping to lie by the side of my well-loved lord."

So most of those brave men died upon that day, and the Northmen won a great battle; but so hard had been the fighting that they could not help respecting their foes, who had preferred to fight till they were all killed rather than pay money for their safety and their lives.

From "The Battle of Maldon." 993 A.D.

Another Riddle of Cynewulf

(750-790 A.D.)

(*Translated by* Rev. Stopford A. Brooke, M.A.)

I HAVE seen a wight wonderfully shapen
Bearing up a booty in between his horns,
A Lift-Vessel flashing light and with loveliness bedecked ;
Bearing home this booty brought from his war-marching !
He would in the burg build himself a bower,
Set it skilfully if it so might be.,
Then there came a wondrous wight o'er the world-wall's roof—
Known to all he is of the earth's indwellers—
Snatched away his war-spoil, and his will against,
Homeward drove the wandering wretch ! Thence he westward went,
With a vengeance faring, hastened further on !
Dust arose to Heaven, dew fell on the earth.
Onward went the night. And not one of men
Of the wandering of that wight ever wotted more.

Answer—The old and the new moon.

wight : creature.
Lift : air.
burg : town.
faring : going.
wotted : knew.

The Story of Alfred the King and Cuthbert the Saint

THIS legend, or story, tells us how once upon a time King Alfred was driven from his throne by the Danes, and was obliged to hide himself for three years in the island of Glastonbury.

It so happened that on a certain day all the men who were with him had gone out to fish, leaving only Alfred, his wife, and one servant in the house. Presently there came slowly up to the door an old pilgrim, or traveller, who begged for food. The King, therefore, asked his servant: "What food have we in the house?" His servant was sad, for food in those days was very scarce and hard to come by, and answered: "My lord, we have but one loaf of bread and a little wine." Then said the King: "Give half the loaf and half the wine to this poor pilgrim." So this was done, and the pilgrim, after giving much thanks to the King, went on his way. When, however, the servant returned to the larder he was much surprised, for he found the loaf and wine whole, as if they had not been touched. Then he reminded the King that there was no boat or bridge by which the pilgrim could have reached the island, and they both wondered greatly.

In the evening the men who had gone a-fishing returned

King Alfred and Saint Cuthbert

with joy, saying : "See, we have caught more fish to-day than in all the three years we have lived upon this island." Then was there made a feast with great rejoicing, and all were merry.

That night, when the King lay upon his bed, thinking of what had come to pass that day, he saw suddenly a great light shine in the room, and in the midst of the light an old man with black hair, clothed in the garment of a priest, and carrying in his hand a book of the Gospels.

"Who art thou?" asked the King.

And he answered: "Alfred, my son, rejoice; I am he to whom thou didst give thy little store of food this day, and I am called Cuthbert, the soldier of Christ. Be thou strong and of joyful heart, for I will be thy shield and thy friend, and I will watch over thee. Now will I tell thee what thou must do: Rise up early in the morning, and blow thine horn thrice, that thine enemies may hear and be affrighted. And by the ninth hour thou shalt have by thee an army of five hundred men ready for battle; be thou, therefore, glad of heart, for God has given thine enemies into thine hand, and none of them shall ever be able to overcome thee."

So in the morning the King uprose with a glad heart, and sailed across to the mainland, where he blew his horn three times. Then there gathered together five hundred of the bravest and best of his friends, and he told them of what Saint Cuthbert had foretold. So they went forth to battle, and put their enemies to flight, and overcame them. And King Alfred became the ruler of a great part of the land of Britain, and he ruled wisely over both good and evil men for all his days.

From "The Life of St Cuthbert." About 1000 A.D.

The Story of Alphege the Archbishop

THIS is another true story from the oldest English history book; it tells us of the cruel treatment of an Archbishop by the Danes.

During the reign of the weak and foolish King Ethelred the country was almost entirely overrun by the Danish army. In vain did the King offer to give them money and food if they would cease from troubling the country. There was no man to tell the people when to fight or when to ask for peace, and whether they paid tribute to the enemy or not, their land was harried and ruined just the same.

Now about the time of Michaelmas the Danes began to besiege Canterbury, and soon afterwards were able to make an entrance into the city through treachery; for a certain man named Alfmar, whose life Archbishop Alphege had once saved, betrayed it into their hands. Then the Danes seized Alphege, together with all the monks of the abbey, and many other men, with their wives and children, and stayed in the town as long as they liked. When they had thoroughly examined it, they went back to their ships, and took the Archbishop with them.

So he who lately had been Archbishop of Canterbury was now a prisoner, and they kept him with them until the day of his martyrdom.

And about Easter-tide all the greatest men in the kingdom brought their tribute to the Danes in London, and paid to them a very large sum of money. But on the Saturday of that week the Danes became very angry with the Archbishop because he would neither give them money himself nor let anyone else pay money for him; for he said that his money belonged to the Church, and that it was not right that they should take it from the English.

So they took Alphege, and led him on the Sunday evening to their place of assembly, just outside London; and, having drunk much wine, they began to pelt him cruelly with the bones of the oxen they had eaten. And one of them struck him with an iron axe on the head, so that he sank to the earth, and died. In the morning some English folk carried him to London, and buried him, with much honour, in St Paul's Minster; but later on he was buried in his own city of Canterbury.

It seems as if even those heathen Danes were a little ashamed of treating an old man in such a cruel way, for we read that when the tribute was paid they made peace for a time, and dispersed their great army; and forty-five of their ships came over and joined the side of the King, on condition that he would feed and clothe them.

From the Saxon Chronicle. 1012 A.D.

The Story of the Quest of the Seven Champions

I. THE SEVEN CHAMPIONS OF ARTHUR

THESE stories were told in old days to British boys and girls as they sat round the fireside and heard the wind outside skirling among the wild Welsh hills. But, no doubt, they crossed the border in time, and were told also to English children, such as most of you, who knew and loved the charming tales of Arthur and his knights.

In the days of King Arthur there lived a noble young prince named Kilhugh, to whom it had been foretold that he should never marry until he could win for his wife the maiden Olwen, daughter of Thornogre Thistlehair, the Chief of the Giants. But, though he was full of love towards the very name of the unknown maid, he could not find out where she lived, nor could anyone tell him anything about her.

He was not cast down, however, but set off upon his steed of dappled grey to seek help from his kinsman Arthur. A fine sight he was, indeed, as he rode along on his prancing horse. His bridle was made of golden chains, his saddle-cloth of fine purple, from the corners of which hung four golden apples of great value.

His slung war horn was of ivory, his sword of gold, inlaid with a cross that shone like the lightning of heaven; his stirrups also of pure gold. Two spears with silver shafts were in his hand, and two beautiful greyhounds, wearing collars set with rubies, sprang before him "like two sea-swallows sporting." So lightly did his charger step that the blades of grass did not bend beneath his tread.

At length he came to Arthur's castle, and having with much difficulty satisfied the Chief of the Porters of the Gate, a sturdy warrior known as the Dusky Hero with the Mighty Grasp, he made his way into Arthur's presence, and told the King his story.

"This one boon I crave of thee, O King," he ended, "that thou wilt obtain for me Olwen, the daughter of Thornogre Thistlehair, Chief of the Giants, to be my bride. I ask it of thee and of all thy valiant knights, for the sake of all the fair ladies who have ever lived in this land."

Then Arthur said: "My Prince, I have never heard of this maiden, nor of her kindred, but messengers shall at once set forth to seek her if thou wilt give them time."

So it was agreed that, this being New Year's Day, they should be given until the last day of the year for their quest.

The messengers of Arthur set forth in haste, each taking a different way. They travelled throughout all the land of Britain, the "Island of the Mighty," and then to foreign lands, asking as they went: "Dost thou know aught of Olwen, the daughter of Thornogre Thistlehair, Chief of the Giants?"

But everyone said "No."

At length came the end of the year, and on the appointed day the messengers appeared in the wide White Hall of Arthur's castle, and all alike declared that they had no news whatever to declare concerning the maiden Olwen.

Then Kilhugh was very angry, and said in hasty words : "I alone am denied by my lord the gift I ask. I will depart from hence at once, and take with me the honour of Arthur, whom men call the most honourable King." But Kai, one of the knights, reproved him for his angry speech, and offered to go forth with him and any others who would accompany them, saying :

"We will not part till we have found the maiden, or till thou art forced to own she is not among those who dwell on this earth."

So Arthur chose six of his knights to go forth with Prince Kilhugh upon his quest.

First came Kai, whose offer had but just been spoken. An excellent spy and sentinel was he, for he could make himself as tall as the tallest tree in the forest, and so scan all the country round. He could hide himself under water, and lie hidden in lake or river for nine days and nights if need be. Such fire was in his nature that when they needed warmth his companions had but to kindle the piled wood at his finger ; he could walk through torrents of rain as dry as on a summer's day ; he could go for nine days and nights without sleep, and no doctor could heal the wound made by his sword.

Next came Sir Bedivere, close brother-in-arms to Kai, the swiftest runner, save Arthur himself and one other, in all the land. One-handed was he, yet he could give more wounds in battle than any three warriors together.

Then followed Uriel, who understood the speech of all

men and all beasts; and Gawain, who was called the "Hawk of May," because he never returned from any undertaking until it had been performed by him.

The fifth to answer Arthur's call was Merlin, a master of magic, who knew how to put a spell upon the knights that would render them invisible.

Last came Peregrine the Guide, who knew how to find the way as well in a strange country as in his own.

"Go forth, O Chieftains," said the King, "and follow the Prince upon this quest; and great shall be the fame of your adventure."

So the Seven Champions rode forth through the great gates of the palace, and set out with high hearts to seek for Olwen, daughter of Thornogre Thistlehair, Chief of the Giants.

II. HOW THE SEVEN CHAMPIONS FOUND OLWEN OF THE WHITE FOOTPRINTS

Onward and onward rode Kilhugh and the six knights until they came at length to a vast plain, stretching in every direction farther than the eye could reach. Over it they rode, and at length perceived through the misty air the towers and battlements of a great castle far away on the borders of the moorland. They rode towards this castle all day long, but yet they never seemed to get any nearer.

All the next day they went on riding, and still the castle seemed as far away as ever. The third evening brought them no nearer. At length Sir Gawain exclaimed: "This must be Fleeting Castle, which can always be seen from a distance, but can never be actually reached."

Now, on the fourth day, to their surprise, the castle no longer advanced before them as they approached, and soon they were able to draw rein before it, and to wonder in amazement at the thousands of sheep which fed upon the plains surrounding its massive walls. Near by sat the shepherd with his dog, tending this enormous flock. The shepherd was a giant in size, and was dressed in the skins of wild beasts. The dog was larger than a full-grown horse; he had the shaggiest of coats, and, though an excellent sheep-dog, was destructive enough elsewhere, for with his fiery breath he would burn up all the dry bushes and dead trees in that region.

The Champions looked somewhat doubtfully at this great animal, and Kai suggested to Uriel that as he knew all tongues, he had better go and speak to the shepherd.

"Not I," answered Uriel. "I agreed when we set out to go just as far as thou, and no farther."

But Merlin came to them, and explained that he had cast a spell over the dog, so that he could not hurt them. So Kilhugh and Kai and Uriel went together to the shepherd, and asked him very politely who owned that countless flock of sheep, and who lived in yonder castle.

"Where have ye lived not to know that?" cried the shepherd. "Everyone in the world ought to know that this is the Castle of Thornogre Thistlehair, Chief of the Giants."

"And who art thou?" they asked.

"I am Constantine, the brother of Thornogre Thistlehair," replied the man, with an angry look. "A fine brother indeed has he been to me! He has taken from me all my lands and possessions, and now I am obliged to earn a living by feeding his sheep."

Then he asked them why they came, and when they replied that they were seeking for Olwen, daughter of Thornogre Thistlehair, he sadly shook his head.

"Alas!" he said, "no one ever tried to find her and returned from this place alive. Go back at once, lest ye all perish also."

"That will we never do!" cried Kilhugh; and the Champions echoed his words.

Then Constantine inquired who Kilhugh was, and when he heard, he cried out that he was his own nephew, and begged that he and his comrades would spend a night at his house, and to this they readily agreed. And as a mark of affection Kilhugh gave his uncle a golden ring; but it was much too small for the giant, who put it forthwith into the finger of one of the gloves which hung from his belt as a sign of his rank as chieftain. Then he signalled to his dog, who immediately began to drive the sheep towards home.

When they reached the house the giant entered first, and gave his wife his gloves to hold. She soon pulled out the ring, and at once began to question him about it; so he told her that their nephew Kilhugh, with six comrades, was even then dismounting at the door. Then the shepherd's wife was glad, and ran forth with hands outstretched to clasp him in her arms; but so big and strong was she that, as Kai quickly saw, no knight could survive her embrace. So as she threw her arms round Kilhugh's neck, he snatched up a log of firewood, and pushed it into her arms instead of the young prince; and when she unloosed it, it was twisted out of all shape. It was somewhat to their relief, therefore, when she took them into the house without further embracing, and set

them down to supper. This was a very frugal meal, and served with great simplicity, for Thornogre had not left his brother so much as a silver goblet or a single chair in his barren hall.

When they had supped, the shepherd's wife asked Kai and Uriel to stay behind after the rest had gone out to the courtyard, and, taking them to the chimney-corner, she opened a great stone box. As she lifted the lid, to their amazement a beautiful boy with golden, curly hair rose up from within.

"Pity indeed," exclaimed Uriel, "to keep so handsome a child shut up here. What hath he done?"

Then the lady wept, and answered: "All my three and twenty sons have been killed by Thornogre Thistle-hair, Chief of the Giants; and now my only hope of keeping him alive is to hide him in this chest, where he has lived ever since he was born." And she wept to think that her boy would never have a chance of doing valiant deeds and of becoming a great knight. Then Kai bade her be of good cheer and let the lad come with them, promising that he should not be slain unless he, Kai, were killed as well.

She agreed to this very gladly, and asked them why they had come to that region. But when she knew they had come to seek for Olwen, she advised them strongly to go home, since in that very quest all her three and twenty sons had perished.

They laughed at her fears, however, and asked if the maiden ever came to the shepherd's house.

"Yes," said the shepherd's wife; "she comes every Saturday to wash her hair. She leaves behind her all her jewels and rings in the water which she uses, and never asks for them again."

"She sat down by Kilhugh"

Then they begged her to ask fair Olwen to visit her at once, and she agreed, on condition that they would not carry her off against her will.

To this the Champions agreed, and sat waiting in the hall for the coming of the maiden.

Very fair she looked as she approached, dressed in a robe of flame-coloured silk, and wearing a jewelled collar of gold round her neck.

More yellow was her hair than the flower of the broom, and her skin was whiter than the foam of the wave; and fairer were her hands and her fingers than the blossoms of the wood-anemone amidst the spray of the meadow fountain. The eye of the trained hawk, the glance of the falcon were not brighter than hers. Her bosom was more snowy than the breast of the white swan; her cheek was redder than the reddest roses. Whoso beheld her was filled with love of her. Four white trefoils sprang up wherever she trod; therefore was she called Olwen of the White Footprints.

Having entered the house she sat down by Kilhugh, who at once loved her greatly, and began to pray her to come away with him, and be his wife. But Olwen, though she returned his affection, answered that she had promised her father not to go away without his leave. She also told him that Thornogre knew that her bridal day was fated to be the day of his death, so that he would withhold his leave as long as possible. She advised him, however, to go to her father, and to grant him everything he demanded, and so in time he should win her hand; but if he denied the giant's least request, he would lose both her and his own life.

When she had said this, she returned to the castle.

III. THE IMPOSSIBLE TASKS SET BY THORNOGRE THISTLEHAIR

The Seven Champions now determined to make their way to the castle, and force an entrance to the hall of Thornogre Thistlehair, Chief of the Giants. It was very dark when they set out, but they easily found their way by the trail of white trefoils which the footprints of Olwen had left.

The castle was guarded by nine warders at the gate and nine watch-dogs along the road which led up to it; but a strange silence had fallen upon both men and beasts, and the Champions slew them all without a sound being heard.

Then they passed through the great door, and entered the hall of the castle.

Just opposite the entrance sat Thornogre Thistlehair upon a high, wide throne. He was terrible to look upon. His eyebrows were so long and bushy that they fell over his eyes like a curtain, and he was taller and broader than three other giants put together. Close by his hand lay three poisoned darts.

After they had greeted him courteously, he asked who they were; and they replied that they were come from Arthur's Court to ask that Olwen, his daughter, should marry Kilhugh the Prince. Then the giant roared for his pages to come and prop up his eyebrows, that he might see what sort of son-in-law was proposed for him.

So when they had propped up his eyebrows he looked angrily at Kilhugh, and bade him come the next day for his answer.

But as they went out of the hall, the giant threw one of his poisoned darts at them. Sir Bedivere caught it just in time and threw it back so neatly that it caught the giant in the knee. Then they laughed, and withdrew, leaving him to storm at them, declaring that the great wound hurt him as much as the sting of a gadfly, and that he might never be able to walk quite so well again.

At dawn the next day they returned to the castle, and again demanded the hand of fair Olwen in marriage. But the giant replied: "I can do naught in this matter till I have consulted her four great-grandmothers and her four great-grandfathers. Come again for my answer."

So they turned to leave the hall; but as they went the giant snatched up the second of his poisoned darts, and flung it after them. Merlin caught it deftly, however, and threw it back with such force that it entered his chest, and stuck out through his back. This left him grumbling that never again would he be able to climb a hill without losing breath, and fearing lest he now might sometimes suffer from pains in the chest.

The third time they visited the giant he was on his guard, and shouted to them not to dare throw any more darts on pain of death. Then he roared to his pages to lift up his eyebrows, and when they had done it, he snatched up the third poisoned dart, and flung it at them without more ado.

But Kilhugh caught it this time, and cast it back at him, so that it pierced one of his eyes. Then, while he grumbled that now his sight would not be so good as before, they went out to dine.

These events made the giant treat his visitors on their next arrival with more civility; besides, he had no more

poisoned darts. He once more inquired why they had come, and when he realised that Kilhugh was determined to marry Olwen, he made him promise that he would do all that he required of him in return for his agreement to the marriage. Kilhugh, mindful of Olwen's warning that he was to agree to perform whatever her father proposed, gave a ready promise, and bade him ask away.

Then did Thornogre Thistlehair propound to him forty Impossible Things, of which these seven are the chief:

Firstly, he must gather nine bushels of flax sown hundreds of years ago in a field of red earth, of which never a seed had sprouted. Not one grain of the measure must be missing, and they must be sown again in a freshly ploughed field to make flax for Olwen's wedding veil.

Secondly, he must find Mabon, the son of Modron, who was taken from his mother when three days old, and had not since been heard of.

Thirdly, he must find the Cauldron of Cruseward the Cauldron-Keeper, in which, if one tries to cook food for a coward, one may wait for ever for the water to boil, but if for a brave man the meal is ready directly it is placed therein. In this cauldron must all the food for the wedding feast be prepared.

Fourthly, since the giant must shave for the wedding, he must obtain for a razor the tusk of the Boar-headed Branch-breaker, which to be of any use must be taken from his skull while he yet lived.

Fifthly, since the giant must wash his hair, all matted together as it was, for the wedding, he must bring to him the Charmed Balsam kept by the Jet-Black Sorceress, daughter of the Snow-White Sorceress, from the Source of the Brook of Sorrow, at the edge of the Twilight Land.

Sixthly, that the giant's hair might be smoothed and combed he must bring the scissors and the comb that are found between the ears of Burstingboar, the Wide-Waster, since they alone would perform the operation without breaking.

Seventhly, he must obtain the sword of Garnard the Giant, since that alone would kill the Wide-Waster, from whom, unless he were killed, the comb and scissors could never be obtained.

When he had made an end of speaking, the giant jeered at the Prince, who, unless he could do all these impossible things, might never wed his daughter. But Kilhugh answered with a high heart: "I have knights for my companions, horses and hounds, and Arthur is my kinsman. I shall do all that thou requirest, thou wicked giant, and shall win thy daughter, but thou shalt lose thy life."

IV. TWO OF THE IMPOSSIBLE TASKS ARE FULFILLED

Scarcely had the Seven Champions left the castle of Thornogre Thistlehair when they were joined by the fair-haired son of the shepherd, who had lived all his life in the chest. Eager to make a great name for himself he implored them to let him accompany them, which accordingly they did. Then they turned their faces towards Arthur's castle.

At evening-time they reached the gates of a very great castle, the largest in the world, and as they pulled up their horses before it, an enormous black giant came out of the gate, and looked at them very hard. They greeted him politely, and asked whose castle this was.

"'Tis the castle of Garnard the Giant," he answered.

They looked at each other with glee, for one of the appointed tasks was to obtain the sword of this very giant. Then they asked if he were used to treat strangers courteously.

The black man shook his head. "No stranger ever entered that castle and came out alive," said he; "but ye have little chance of entrance, for no traveller is permitted to enter who knows no handicraft."

The Seven Champions on hearing this rode on to the entrance gate, and called for admittance. The porter refused, however, saying that there was revelry within, and that no man set foot inside who did not bring his craft with him. But Kai declared that he was a burnisher of swords, and that no man could excel him at that trade, whereupon the porter went to report the matter to Garnard the Giant. Now, it so happened that Garnard had long wished for one who could brighten and clean his sword, so he bade the porter to admit him.

So Kai entered alone, and was brought before the giant, who ordered his sword to be brought to him. Then Kai drew out his whetstone, and, first asking if he required it to glitter with a blue or a white lustre, he polished half the blade, and returned it to the giant, saying: "How is that?"

The giant was highly pleased. "If the rest of my sword can be made to look like that," said he, "I shall value it above all my treasures. But how comes it that so clever a craftsman is wandering about alone without a companion?"

"But I have a companion," said Kai—"a cunning craftsman, too, though not at this work. Send, I pray

you, and admit him. And the porter shall know him by this sign: the head of his lance shall spring into the air, draw blood from the wind, and return to its place again."

Then the porter opened the gate, and Bedivere marched into the hall, ready for what might befall, and stood watching Kai as he went on polishing the sword. This being done, to gain more time he asked for the sheath, and he fell to mending it and putting in new sides of wood.

Meantime, as he had hoped, while all the porters and followers of the giant stood gaping round him, the young son of the herdsman had managed to climb over the castle wall, and to help his companions over also, whereupon they were able to make their way to hiding-places behind doors and pillars, from which they could see the company in the hall without being seen themselves.

By this time Kai had finished both sword and scabbard, and, stepping up to the giant's great chair, pretended to hand them to him. But, as the giant was off his guard, he lifted the sword, and brought it down on Garnard's neck, so that he cut off his head. Before his followers could lay hands on Kai and Bedivere, the knights rushed out upon them, and slew them all. Then, having loaded themselves with gold and jewels, but above all with the precious sword, they set forth again for Arthur's palace.

This time they reached it in safety, and, having told their story, asked the advice of the King as to which of the six remaining quests they should first undertake. To seek out Mabon, the son of Modron, was Arthur's decision; and for this undertaking he chose Uriel, because he could understand the speech of both animals and birds, as well as that of all strange men; and Idwel, because he

was Mabon's kinsman, with Kai and Bedivere, because they were known never to turn back from any adventure until it was accomplished.

So these four set out upon their quest.

Now, Mabon had been lost so long ago that not the oldest man on the earth, nor their great-grandfathers before them, had ever heard anything at all about him. But Idwel remembered that many birds and beasts live much longer than the oldest man, so they determined to seek out the oldest of these.

"And who," said they, "could be older than the Ousel of Deepdell? Let us seek her help."

So they made their way through a great forest till they came to a shadowy place, where on a small stone sat the Ousel of Deepdell; and her they implored to tell them if she knew anything of Mabon, son of Modron, who was taken from between his mother and the wall when he was only three days old.

"When I first came here," answered the Ousel gravely, "I was but a fledgling. On this spot where I now sit stood a smith's stone anvil. Since then no hand has touched it, but every evening I have pecked at it with my beak as I smoothed my feathers before sleeping. Now all that remains of it is this little pebble upon which I sit. Yet through all the years that have passed while this change took place I have never heard of Mabon, the son of Modron. But do not despair: I will take you to a race of creatures who were made before me, and them ye shall inquire of again."

Then she took them to a place where, at the foot of an ancient oak, lay the Stag of the Fern Brake. Of him they once more asked the question: "Dost thou know

anything of Mabon, son of Modron, taken from his mother when three days old ? "

The Stag answered: "When first I came here this great forest was a vast plain, in which grew one little oak sapling. This sapling became in time an oak-tree, and after its long lifetime gradually decayed until it became this stump. Now, an oak-tree is three hundred years in growing, three hundred years in its full strength, and three hundred years in its decay. Yet in all this time I have never heard aught of Mabon, son of Modron. But, since ye are Arthur's knights, I will take you to one who was made before my time." Then he led them to the Owl of Darkdingle.

"When first I came here," said the Owl from his dark, cavernous home when he heard their question, "this valley was covered with a vast wood. It decayed away, and another grew up, and after that had withered away, a third, which now ye see. But never have I heard of the man whom ye seek. Yet, since ye are Arthur's knights, I will take ye to the oldest creature in the world—to the Eagle of the Aldergrove."

So thither they went, and when he heard their question the Eagle answered: "When I first arrived, there was a rock in this place so high that I could perch on its top and peck at the stars, and so long have I been here that now it is but a few inches high. Never have I heard of this man save once, and that was when I visited the Lone Lake. There I stuck my claws into a salmon, hoping to kill him for my supper; but he dragged me into deep water, so that I barely escaped with my life. But when I went with all my band to slay him, he sent ambassadors, and made good peace with me, and came and begged me

to take fifty fish spears out of his back. He, if anyone can, will tell you what you want to know, and I will be your guide to him."

So they journeyed on till they reached a great blue lake, hidden in the depths of the forest, and there they found the Salmon of the Lone Lake. He heard their question, and looking at them very wisely, replied: "Such wrong as I have never found elsewhere have I found under the walls of Gloucester Castle, on the River Severn, up which I travel with every tide. And that ye may know it is so, come, two of ye, and travel thither upon my shoulders."

Then Kai and Uriel came down to the water, and stood upon the shoulders of the Salmon of Lone Lake, who swam with them down the Severn, and brought them under the walls of Gloucester Castle.

"Hark!" said the Salmon; and as they listened, a voice was heard from the dungeon wall wailing in deepest sorrow and woe. Then Uriel cried: "Whose voice is this that moans within this gloomy cell?"

"Alas!" wailed the voice, "'tis that of Mabon, the son of Modron, shut up eternally in the prison of Gwyn, son of Nith, King of Faerie. Here I, the Elfin Huntsman, ever young, am shut out eternally from the sight of wood and fell and the joyful chase which is my birthright."

"Canst thou be ransomed with silver and gold?" asked Uriel.

"No," answered Mabon; "if ever I am rescued from this cruel place it must be by battle and strife."

Then Uriel and Kai returned to their companions.

Seeing that this was the kind of adventure that Arthur loved, they journeyed back to the King, and told him all. So he prepared a great army, and marched by land to

attack Gloucester Castle. But while he fought before the gates, Kai and Bedivere had sailed down the river on the shoulders of the Salmon of Lone Lake, and, finding the water-side portion of the Castle unprotected, they broke through the wall, and carried off Mabon, the son of Modron, and he returned with them to Arthur's Court.

V. HOW PRINCE KILHUGH WON HIS BRIDE

While Arthur and his knights were discussing which of the Impossible Tasks should next be undertaken, it so happened that a certain prince, named Gwyther, who was also one of Arthur's knights, was walking over a mountain in his own country, the Land of the Dawn.

And as he walked, deep in thought, he heard a sad little cry. Up and down he looked, but nothing could he see that could explain such mournful cry. But presently it came again from under his very feet, and there he saw an ant-hill. Inside the ant-hill the little creatures were wailing piteously, for the heath on the mountain-side was afire, and in a short time their kingdom would be all in a blaze.

Then Prince Gwyther drew his sword, and cut off the ant-hill at a blow, and threw it into a place of safety.

"Our grateful thanks are thine," cried the ants. "Now tell us what we can do for thee in return, Prince Gwyther of the Land of the Dawn."

The Prince pondered a moment, and then replied: "All the world knows that Kilhugh, one of the Companions of Arthur, seeking the hand of the fair Olwen, is required by her father to bring him the nine bushels of flax

seed sown in his field to make the wedding veil for his bride. If one grain is missing the marriage will be forbidden; and, though we are Arthur's knights, not one of us can find these tiny seeds. Now, can ye do this task for me?"

"That will we joyfully," cried the ants, and they made their way in haste to the field of Thornogre Thistlehair, Chief of the Giants.

When evening began to fall they returned to the Land of the Dawn, where Prince Gwyther had set up a bushel measure. Up its sides they climbed, each with a seed in its mouth; and nine times they filled the measure, until only one seed was wanting. "'Tis well," they cried; "the lame emmet has not yet come home." And before nightfall the lame emmet toiled up to the bushel measure, and dropped in the last seed.

So the nine bushels of flax seed were taken to the castle of Arthur, and given to Prince Kilhugh.

Then said King Arthur: "Let us now go to Ireland to seek for the Cauldron of Cruseward the Steward of Odgar, the Irish King."

Now, this cauldron, as you will remember, was of such a kind that when food for a coward was cooked in it the food remained as it was at first, but if for a brave man it was ready for eating directly it was placed in the pot. So it was very precious; and when Arthur's request for it was received by Odgar, Cruseward replied in wrath: "Not a glimpse of my cauldron shall he obtain, even if it would give him all the blessings in the world; much less will I give it him altogether."

Then Arthur called together his men of war, and sailed over the stormy seas to Ireland. When the people saw

Prince Gwyther and the Bushel Measure

him in battle array, they were afraid, and counselled Odgar to receive him peaceably. So Odgar sent friendly messages, and invited him to a banquet in his palace.

Now when the banquet was over, Odgar was about to give presents to his guests, but Arthur would take nothing. He wanted naught, he said, but the Cauldron of Cruseward. When Cruseward heard this, he thundered out: "Nay, King Arthur, I will never give it to thee. If thou couldst have it for the asking it would have been given at the bidding of King Odgar, not at thine."

When Bedivere heard this rude reply he was very angry, and, rushing upon him, seized the cauldron, and set it on the shoulders of Arthur's Cauldron-Bearer. Then swords were drawn, and the men of Arthur's host fell upon Cruseward and his followers, and slew them. Thus they carried off the cauldron, and bore it, full of Irish gold, back to the Island of the Mighty.

After this adventure they set forth to obtain the Charmed Balsam that was guarded by the Jet-Black Sorceress, daughter of the Snow-White Sorceress, at the Brook of Sorrow, on the edge of the Twilight Land. And when they approached the dismal cavern where she dwelt, King Arthur was joined by Gwyn of the Twilight Land, and Gwyther from the Land of the Dawn, who, knowing the Sorceress and her power, advised that two of his attendants should first be sent into the cave. Directly the first appeared the Sorceress seized him by the hair, and threw him down, and trampled on him. The second dragged her away from him, but could do nothing against her, for she kicked them and beat them and thrust them forth again.

Then Arthur would have gone in himself; but Prince

Gwyn and Prince Gwyther prevented him, saying it would not be a fitting adventure for so great a king, and persuaded him to send in the two Tall Brothers. But these two were so ill treated by the Sorceress that they came out more dead than alive, and had to be lifted on to their horses. Then, when he saw his followers so ill used, nothing could keep Arthur back. He rushed into the cave, and with one stroke of his dagger, killed the wicked Sorceress, while Kai carried off the Charmed Balsam.

They next set out to hunt the Boar-headed Branch-breaker; but soon they heard that no man could pluck out the tusk from the living head of this terrible animal but Odgar, King of Ireland.

With some difficulty they persuaded him to accompany them; but at length the huntsmen gathered together, with him at their head, and a great hunt for the boar began. The swiftest dogs could not bring the animal to bay, until at length Arthur's own hound, Cavall, brought him to the ground, and Odgar rushed up to pull out the tusk. But he would have been killed, had not Kai been there to strike the Branch-breaker down directly Odgar had plucked it out.

There yet remained to seek out the jewelled scissors and comb that were between the ears of Burstingboar, the Wide-Waster.

Now, this Burstingboar had laid waste a great part of Ireland, so that all men went in terror of him; and, that the heroes might not be misled about the curious things said to lie between his ears, Merlin was sent to Ireland to seek him out and see if it were as the giant had said.

So Merlin tracked Burstingboar to his den on Cold Blast Ridge, and, having changed himself into a bird, flew

down into a thicket close by. From thence he could see the creature lying on the ground, with his seven young boars at his side, and between his ears twinkled the jewels of the scissors and the comb. Then Merlin thought it was a sad thing that the heroes should lose their lives for such things, and determined to try to carry them off himself. So he flew upon the head of Burstingboar, and tried to snatch up the razor; but all he really got was a great bristle. Then Burstingboar rose up in a great rage, foaming at the mouth. He could see no one; but a fleck of the poisonous foam fell upon Merlin, and hurt him so that he never quite recovered.

When he heard this news, Arthur gathered together such a number of brave knights and squires that the Irish feared he was about to attack their land, but when he told them he had come to deliver them from the dreaded Burstingboar, their joy knew no bounds. And so it was arranged that those Irish who had joined his host should first attack the boar; then, if he still lived, he should be attacked by Arthur's own knights; and if by that time he were not slain, Arthur should himself hunt him on the third day.

But the first day and the second saw the boar triumphant; and when Arthur took his turn he fought for nine days and nights without even wounding the creature or one of his cubs. At the end of that time all the knights besought Arthur to tell them the secret about the boar, which all this time he had kept.

Then Arthur told them that the creature had once been a king, but for his sins and his great pride had been changed into a boar. And he sent Uriel to confer with him concerning the jewelled comb and scissors. But when Uriel spoke gently to him, bidding him deliver these

up at the request of Arthur, the boar grew very fierce, and said: "Not only shall Arthur never even see these jewels, but I with my young ones will go forthwith and harry the land of Arthur, doing all the hurt to it that we can."

When they heard this news all the host arose at dawn to prevent them leaving Ireland; but when they looked towards the sea, there was the boar with his young ones swimming far away to the coast of Britain. And before the King could cross the Irish Sea, the boars had landed at Milford Haven, and destroyed every living thing in the neighbourhood.

Then terror fell on all the land, and eagerly men looked for Arthur to come to their aid, who, when he arrived, set out at once with a crowd of mighty huntsmen to kill the beasts. But it was exceeding hard to find the boar, though his tracks were well marked by the ruin of flocks and men; and when they did come up with him, he slew with his mighty tusks a full half-dozen of Arthur's followers, and dashed off to a mountain-top, where they lost all sign of him: neither man nor dog could tell whither he had disappeared.

At last they heard that the boars were ravaging a valley some miles away. Thither they followed, and after a hard struggle they killed the young boars one by one. But after a long pursuit Burstingboar vanished again, so completely this time that the host returned to Cornwall, thinking he must have left the land.

Scarcely had Arthur entered his palace when a breathless messenger rushed into the hall.

"Arise!" he cried. "The boar is ruining thy domain, trampling down towers and towns, uprooting trees, and

killing men and cattle on all sides, and he is now coming over the mountains to do the same in Cornwall."

Then Arthur made this speech to his followers :

" Men of the Island of the Mighty, Burstingboar, the Wide-Waster, has slain many of our bravest men, but he shall never enter Cornwall while I live. You may do as you please ; but for me, I will no longer hunt him, but shall meet him face to face."

Forthwith he posted men at various spots to prevent the creature from landing, and then rode up to the river's brink. As he arrived, suddenly, with a great rush, Burstingboar sprang out of the forest, and tried to cross on his way to Cornwall. But Arthur and his companions drove their horses into the water, and followed him, and somehow or other seized him by his fore feet as he scrambled up the bank, and flung him back into the river ; and as he fell, Mabon, the son of Modron, caught the razor from behind one of his ears, and Kenneder the Wild snatched the scissors from behind the other.

Yet, even while they did this, Burstingboar upreared himself from the water, dashed up the river-bank, and disappeared. Then all the host followed, but they only came up to him when he had got well into Cornwall. Then a desperate fight began. By harassing him all day they managed to keep him from ravaging the land, and when he tried to get into Devon they were too many for him. Over the moors, down the coombs, up the hills, they chased him, till at length, being desperate, he turned, and made for the sea. In he plunged, but, though the pursuing horses stayed their feet at the water's edge, those two good hounds, Raceapace and Boundoft, who had followed him so long, could not hold themselves back,

but plunged in after him into the waves. For long the heroes watched his course, with those two fierce dogs close behind him; but from that day to this nothing more has ever been heard of either Burstingboar or the two hounds.

Now, all the Impossible Tasks had been fulfilled, and joyfully did Prince Kilhugh ride to the giant's castle to claim his bride. But Thornogre Thistlehair looked on in gloomy silence as the marvels were spread out before him; he allowed himself to be shaven and combed; but though he could not refuse to give the Prince his daughter's hand, he openly said that he did it with no good will. Then the herdsman's son stood forth, and cried: "O giant, three and twenty of my brothers thou hast foully slain, and defrauded my father of his heritage. For these things thou shalt surely die by my hand to-day."

So he dragged him by his hair to the castle battlements, and, being very strong, he slew him there, and cut off his head. And the castle was given to the herdsman; but Kilhugh married fair Olwen, and they were happy ever after as long as they both lived.

From the "Mabinogion," A Welsh Romance. Thirteenth century A.D.

Old English Charms

(*Translated by* Rev. Stopford A. Brooke, M.A.)

IN the days of old the English people were great believers in charms—that is, in verses recited in order to obtain some result. They were the tokens left in the land of the days when every man was heathen, and worshipped and feared a great company of gods and goddesses. These last were often followed by a crowd of fierce witch-wives, bringing all kinds of tiresome ills —such as toothache, rheumatism, or loss of some valued possession. These verses are one of the charms spoken against these witches, one of whom has just caused a woodman to double up with the pain of a stitch in the side. His fellow-workmen gather round him, and while one holds over him a wooden shield, as if to guard him from weapons shot from the air, the others sing :

Loud were they, lo, loud, as over the land they rode;
Fierce of heart were they, as over the hill they rode.
Shield thee now thy self; from this spite thou mayst escape thee!
Out little spear if herein thou be!
Underneath the linden stood he, underneath the shining shield,
While the mighty women mustered up their strength;

And the spears they sent screaming through the air !
Back again to them will I send another
Arrow forth a-flying from the front against them ;
Out little spear if herein thou be !
Sat the smith thereat, smote a little seax out.

. . . . . .

Out little spear if herein thou be !
Six the smiths that sat there— making slaughter-spears :
Out little spear, in be not, spear !
If herein there hide flake of iron hard,
Of a witch the work, it shall melt away.
Wert thou shot into the skin, or shot into the flesh,
Wert thou shot into the blood, (or shot into the bone),
Wert thou shot into the limb— never more thy life be teased !
If it were the shot of Esa, or it were of elves the shot,
Or it were of hags the shot ; help I bring to thee.
This to boot for Esa-shot, this to boot for elfin shot,
This to boot for shot of hags ! Help I bring to thee.
Flee, witch, to the wild hilltop . . . .
But thou—be thou hale, and help thee the Lord !

seax : knife
Esa : goddess
to boot : to be good for
hale : well, strong.

Probably by Cynewulf. Eighth century.

The Lady of the Fountain

I. THE TALE OF KYNON

KYNON was the only son of his father and mother, and a very brave and daring young knight. He thought there was nothing in the world too mighty for him to do; and after he had achieved all the possible adventures in his own country, he equipped himself with horse and armour, and went forth to journey in desert and unknown lands.

One day it chanced that he came to the fairest valley in the world, where all the trees grew to the same height; a river ran through the valley, and a path was by the side of the river. He followed this path till midday, and travelled along the remainder of the valley till evening, and at length came to a large and shining castle, at the foot of which was a rushing torrent. Before the gates stood two youths with yellow, curling locks, wearing golden frontlets upon their heads and garments of yellow satin, with gold clasps on their insteps. Each of them held in his hand an ivory bow, and their arrows were winged with peacock's feathers. Their daggers had blades of gold and hilts of whalebone, and they played with them as they stood, shooting them to and fro. They allowed Kynon to pass into the courtyard, and there he saw a man, in the

prime of life, also clad in a robe of yellow satin, and round the top of his yellow mantle was a band of gold lace. He received Kynon with great courtesy, and at once conducted him into the hall of the castle. In the hall sat four and twenty damsels embroidering satin at a window, and they were all so very fair that the eyes of Kynon were almost dazzled at the sight of so much beauty. They rose at his coming, and six of them took his horse, and unbuckled his armour; six more took his weapons, and washed them in a basin till they shone like the sun; another six spread cloths on the table and prepared meat; and the last six took off his soiled cloak and doublet, and put on garments of fine linen and yellow satin, with a broad gold band round the mantle. Then they gave him cushions of red linen on which to sit, and brought bowls of silver full of water wherein to wash, and towels, some of green linen, some of white. Presently, when all was ready, they sat down to eat at a silver table, with cloths of the finest linen, and the meats that were brought were of the most delicious flavour in the world.

At length, when the stranger's hunger was appeased, the Man in Yellow began to inquire who he was, and what was the cause of his journey.

And Kynon told him that he was trying to find out if anyone were his superior, or whether he could gain the mastery over all. The Man in Yellow smiled, saying: "If I did not fear that harm would come to thee I would show thee that thou seekest."

Then Kynon implored him to make trial of him, and at length the man agreed. "Sleep here to-night," said he, "and on the morning arise early, and take the road upward through the valley till you come to the wood by

which you came. A little way within the wood you will find a path branching off to the right. Follow this until you come to a large, sheltered glade, with a mound in the centre. On the top of the mound you will see a black man of great size, larger than two men of this world. He has but one foot, and one eye in the middle of his forehead. In his hand he holds a club which no two men could lift. He is exceedingly ill-favoured to look at, and he is the warden of that wood. And round about him you will see grazing a thousand wild animals. Inquire of him the way out of the glade, and he will point out the road which will lead you to that of which you are in quest."

Next morning Kynon arose very early, and rode away. All came to pass as the Man in Yellow had said, except that the black man was of huger size and his club looked far heavier than Kynon had been led to suppose. When Kynon saw the thousand animals browsing around the mound and the black man sitting on the top of it, he asked what power he held over those creatures.

"I will show thee, little man," said he; and, taking up his club, he struck one of the stags a great blow. The stag brayed loudly, and at the sound all the animals came together, as many as the stars in the sky, so that Kynon scarcely found room to stand. Serpents were there, and dragons, and every kind of beast. Then the black man looked at them, and bade them go feed; and they all bowed their heads, and did homage to him ere they departed.

Then Kynon asked the way out of the glade; and when the man knew his reason he said to him: "Take the path that leads towards the head of the glade, and ascend the woody steeps until you reach the summit;

there you will find an open space like a large valley, and in the midst of it a tall tree, with branches greener than the greenest pine-trees.

"Beneath this tree is a fountain, and by the fountain a marble slab, and on the slab a silver bowl attached by a silver chain. Take the bowl, and throw a bowlful of water on the slab, and you shall see what will happen. And if you do not find trouble in that adventure you need not seek it during the rest of your life."

So Kynon did as he had said, and found the fountain, and threw a bowlful of water upon the slab. And immediately there came a mighty peal of thunder, so that the earth shook. With the thunder came a shower of hailstones, so heavy that each one pierced to the bone, and Kynon could only endure it by placing his shield over his own and his horse's head. After that the weather became fair; but when he looked at the tree, behold! there was not a single leaf left upon it. Then a flock of birds came, and alighted on the tree, and never was heard such sweet strains as those they sang; and while he was listening to the birds a murmuring voice rose through the valley, like a gust of wind, which said:

"O knight, what has brought you hither? What evil have I done to you that you should act towards me and my possessions as you have this day? Do you not know that the shower to-day has left alive neither beast nor man that was exposed to it?"

Scarcely had the voice died away when there appeared a knight clad in black velvet, riding a coal-black horse, who made a rush at Kynon then and there. And the onset was so furious, and Kynon so little prepared, that he was overthrown. Then the Black Knight passed the

shaft of his lance through the bridle-rein of Kynon's horse, and, without a glance at his fallen adversary, rode off the way he had come. There was nothing left for the fallen knight but to make his way back to the castle. The black man jeered aloud at him as he passed through the glade, and, with much anger and mortification, the knight hurried on to the castle of the Man in Yellow. There he was received with the utmost hospitality; and no one alluded to his adventure, nor did he mention it to any. On the next day he found, ready saddled, a dark bay horse, with nostrils as red as scarlet, and, mounted on this, he returned to Arthur's Court.

II. THE TALE OF OWAIN

When Kynon had related at Arthur's Court the story of his adventure with the Black Knight, one of his companions, Owain by name, said: "Is it not befitting that one of us go and discover this place?"

"It is very well to talk about it," said Sir Kai, "but 'tis harder to carry it out."

Then Owain went away, and prepared his horse and his armour, and very early next morning he rode away in the direction which Kynon had pointed out to him.

In due time he reached the castle, and was kindly received by the Man in Yellow, and set down before a very excellent meal. And the four and twenty maidens seemed even lovelier to Owain than they had to Kynon.

When they asked him his errand Owain replied that he was in quest of the knight who guards the fountain; and the Yellow Man, though very reluctantly, pointed out

the way. All happened to Owain as it had to Kynon, save that the shower seemed more violent and the song of the birds even sweeter than before. And as they sang the Black Knight appeared, and rode violently upon Owain ; but he was prepared to receive him, and they fought fiercely together. Their lances broke with the shock of their attack, and, drawing their swords, they fought until Owain struck the knight a blow which pierced through helmet, skull, and brain.

Then the Black Knight, knowing he had received a mortal blow, turned his horse, and fled. But Owain pursued hard after him until they came to a lordly castle. When they reached the gate the Black Knight was allowed to enter ; but Owain was so close behind that, when the portcullis fell, it struck his horse behind the saddle, and cut him in two, carrying away the rowels of the spurs which were on Owain's heels. So the rowels and part of the horse were outside and Owain was shut up inside with the other part of the horse between the two gates, for the inner one was closed. As the knight stood wondering what would happen next he saw through an opening in the upper part of the gate a street facing him, with a row of houses on either side ; and from one of these houses came out a maiden, with yellow, curling locks, dressed in yellow satin, with shoes of parti-coloured leather. She approached the gate, and desired him to open it. "Truly, lady," said Owain ruefully, "I can no more open it for you than you can for me."

"That is very sad," said the damsel ; "yet it is the part of every woman to do what she can to succour you, for you are a loyal squire of dames, so I will do whatever is in my power for you. Take this ring, and put it on your

finger, with the stone inside your hand, and close your hand upon the stone. As long as you conceal it, it will conceal you. Presently, when they have consulted together, they will come to fetch you, in order to put you to death, and will be much upset when they cannot find you. But I shall sit on the horse-block yonder, and you will see me though I cannot see you. Come, therefore, and put your hand upon my shoulder, that I may know you are near; and whichever way I go, do you follow me."

So Owain vanished from the sight of men, and sorely grieved were his foes when they came to seek him and found only part of his horse. But he found the maiden, and laid his hand upon her shoulder; and she led him to a splendid chamber, where even the nails were painted in beautiful colours, and there she gave him abundance of food in silver dishes, and left him to rest. Now, on that night the nobleman who owned the castle, whom Owain had so grievously wounded, died; and the maiden of the golden locks presently brought Owain to a window from whence he might see the funeral procession. And foremost among the mourners walked the Countess of that domain. She was so very beautiful that Owain fell deeply in love with her, and said to the maiden: "Verily, there goes the woman I love best in the world."

"Truly," said the maiden, "she too shall love you not a little, and I will go woo for thee."

So the maiden, whose name was Luned, went to the chamber of her mistress the Countess, and found her weeping, because now the Black Knight was slain, there was no one to defend her dominions. For so it was that, so long as the fountain was safe, all was well, but if that were not defended, all her lands would soon be lost.

Then Luned said : " Surely you know that no one can defend the fountain except he be a knight of Arthur's household. Let me go to Arthur's Court, and I will bring back with me a warrior who can guard the fountain as well as, or even better than, he who kept it formerly."

" That will be a hard task," said the Countess. " Go, however, and make good that which thou hast promised."

But Luned did not go to Arthur's Court ; she went instead to the chamber of Owain, and, having warned him to wait until it was due time, hid herself as long as it would have taken to travel to the Court.

Then she brought Owain a coat and mantle of yellow satin, on which were bands of broad gold lace ; and for his feet shoes of softest leather, fastened by golden clasps in the shape of lions ; and thus they proceeded to the chamber of the Countess.

But when they arrived the Countess looked steadfastly upon Owain, and said : " Luned, this knight has not the appearance of a traveller."

" Well, lady, he is none the worse for that," said Luned.

" I am certain," said the Countess, " that this is the man who killed my master, the Black Knight."

" So much the better for you, lady," replied Luned, " for if he had not been stronger than your master, he could not have killed him. There is no use in crying over spilt milk."

Then the Countess looked again on Owain, and when she saw he was a very goodly knight, and courageous withal, she began to return his affection for her ; and soon afterwards they were married. So Owain defended the fountain with lance and sword ; and whenever a knight came, there he overthrew him, and ransomed him for his

full worth, and what he then obtained he divided among his barons and his knights, so that he became very much beloved. And so three years passed away.

III. THE FURTHER ADVENTURES OF OWAIN

When three long years had passed away, King Arthur began to get very sad because he heard nothing of his good knight Owain. And when the others saw his sadness they suggested that he and the men of his household should go and seek Owain. So they set off; and Kynon was their guide. They spent the night at the castle of the Man in Yellow, and he and his twenty-four damsels waited upon them with the utmost hospitality. In the morning they set off for the wood, and, passing the black man, they came to the fountain. Then Sir Kai begged that he might throw the water on the slab and receive the adventure that first befell. All happened as before, save that several of the attendants were killed by the hailstorm; and as they stood listening to the song of the birds, a knight clad in black satin, riding on a coal-black horse, spurred up to Sir Kai, and in a few minutes Sir Kai was overthrown.

Then the knight rode off, and the host of Arthur encamped as darkness drew on.

The next day Sir Kai met the Black Knight again, and this time was wounded very sorely. Then each of the knights in turn fought, and all were overthrown save one, and he was called Gwalchmai. The fight between him and the Black Knight was very fierce, but at length a heavy blow broke the helmet of Gwalchmai, and showed

his face. And, behold, the Black Knight threw down his sword, and embraced him, saying: "Little did I know that you were my cousin Gwalchmai." Then did Gwalchmai know the voice of Owain, and embraced him, and brought him to Arthur, and everyone was glad to see the long-lost knight again.

So all the company proceeded to the castle of the Countess of the Fountain, and there partook of a great banquet, which had been three years preparing; for Owain had always said that Arthur would come to seek him. And when all was over Arthur prepared to depart, but first he sent a message to the Countess, begging her to permit Owain to go and visit him for the space of three months. So Owain departed, though much against the will of his Countess; and when he was once more among his kindred and friends he forgot all about his wife and the People in Yellow, and stayed away three years instead of three months. At the end of these three years, as Owain sat one day at meat in the royal city of Caerleon-on-Usk, there rode through the doorway of the hall a damsel on a bay horse covered with foam, wearing a bridle and saddle of gold; and the damsel was clad in a robe of yellow satin. She came up to Owain, and, taking the ring from off his hand, "Thus," she said, "shall be treated the deceiver, the traitor, the faithless, and the disgraced."

Then she turned her horse's head, and rode away.

Then was Owain deeply ashamed and sorrowful; and on the next day he left the Court, and wandered to the distant parts of the country and to waste places and barren mountains. And he stayed there until his clothes were worn out and his body wasted away and his hair grown long. His only companions were the wild beasts with

whom he fed, and they grew to love him as their friend; but after a time he became so weak that he could no longer abide with them, so he descended from the mountains into the fairest park in all the world, which was said to belong to a widowed countess.

One day the Countess and her maidens were walking by a lake that was in the middle of the park, when they saw in the pathway the prostrate figure of a man. At first they thought he was dead; but they went near, and touched him, and found there was life in him, though he was very much exhausted. So the Countess returned to the castle, and sent one of her maidens with a flask full of precious balsam to the sick man, together with a horse and a good suit of clothes, and said:

"Go with these, and place them near the man we saw just now. Anoint him with the balsam near his heart, and if there is still life in him he will arise through the strength of the balsam. Then watch what he will do."

The maiden departed, and forthwith poured the whole of the balsam on Owain, and left the horse and the garments close by, and hid herself, and watched what would happen. Presently he began to move his hands, then his arms, and then all at once he rose up, and was ashamed to see how ragged and dirty he looked. Then he perceived the horse, and the garments; so he washed in the lake, and crept to the horse, and with difficulty clothed himself, and clambered on to the saddle. Then came the maiden from her hiding-place, and he was rejoiced to see her, and asked her to whom the park belonged.

"Truly," said she, "a widowed countess owns park and castle, which are all that are left to her of two noble earldoms left to her by her late husband. All the rest has

been taken from her by a neighbouring earl because she refused to become his wife."

"That is a pity," said Owain. And the maiden conducted him to the castle, and brought him to a pleasant room, and left him there. Then she went to the Countess, and gave her back the flask. "Ha! damsel," said her mistress, "where is all the balsam?" "Have I not used it all?" said she. "O maiden," said the Countess, "thou hast wasted for me seven-score pounds' worth of ointment on an unknown stranger. However, now that he is here, wait thou upon him until he is quite recovered."

So the maiden tended Owain, and gave him meat and drink and medicine until he was well again. And in three months he was as comely a knight as ever he had been before. One day he heard a great tumult in the castle, and asked the maiden the cause thereof. She told him that the earl whom she had mentioned before had come against the Countess with a large army to force her to marry him. "Has she a horse and arms to spare?" asked Owain. "She has the best in the world," said she.

"Then go and beg the loan of them," said Owain, "that I may go and have a look at this earl." "I will," said the maiden. So she made her request to the Countess; but the lady laughed a bitter laugh, and said: "He may as well have them to-day as my enemy to-morrow; but I know not what he would do with them."

Then they brought out a beautiful black horse, with a beechen saddle, and a suit of armour for man and horse; and Owain armed himself, and rode forth, attended by two pages. When they came in sight of the enemy they could not see where the army ended, it was so great; but Owain asked where the earl himself was, and when he

was pointed out, he sent the pages back to the castle, and rode forward till he met the earl. And Owain was now so strong that he drew the earl completely out of the saddle, and turned his horse's head towards the castle, and, although it was no easy task, brought the earl to the gate. When they had entered, he gave the earl as a gift to the Countess, and said to her : " Lo, here is a return to you for your wondrous balsam."

Then the earl restored to the Countess her two earldoms in ransom for his life, and for his freedom he gave her half his own domains and all his jewels and gold and silver.

After this Owain departed from the castle, though all honoured him greatly and begged him to stay with them. But he was still ashamed and sorrowful at heart, and preferred rather to ride forth into desert places again.

One day, as he was journeying through a wood, he heard a great uproar, and, riding forward, found a great craggy mound, on the side of which was a grey rock. In the rock was a cleft, and in the cleft a serpent ; and near by stood a black lion, and every time the lion moved to go hence the serpent darted towards him to attack him.

Then Owain unsheathed his sword, and struck the serpent, and cut him in two, and went on his way. But, strange to say, the lion followed him, and played about him like a dog. All that day they travelled together ; and at night Owain dismounted, and turned his horse loose in a woody meadow. And he kindled a fire, the lion bringing him wood enough to last for three nights. Then the lion disappeared, and after a while returned bearing a fine, large roebuck, which he laid before Owain ; and when it was skinned and roasted, it made an excellent supper for them

both. As he was eating, he heard a deep sigh near him, which was repeated three times.

"Who is there?" asked Owain. "A mortal maiden," was the reply. "Who art thou?" he asked again. And the voice replied: "I am Luned, the handmaiden of the Countess of the Fountain. In this stone vault am I imprisoned on account of the knight who came from Arthur's Court and married my Countess. For a short time only he stayed with her, and then went away, and has never returned—and he was the friend I loved most in the world. And one day two of the pages of the Countess's chamber reviled him, and called him ill names, and I told them that they two were not a match for him alone. Then they imprisoned me in this stone cell, and said I should be put to death unless he came himself to deliver me by a certain day—and that is the day after to-morrow. But I have no one to send to seek him for me. And his name is Owain, the son of Urien."

Then Owain said: "Art thou certain that if the knight knew all this, he would come to your rescue?"

"I am most certain of it," said she.

So Owain bade her hope for the best, and meantime bade her tell him if there were any place near, where he could get lodging for the night. She bade him follow the river, so he rode along till he came to a very fine castle. The Earl who ruled over the place received him very hospitably, and good fodder was given to his horse. But the lion went and lay down in the horse's manger, so that none of the men of the castle dared to approach him. Meantime Owain had been brought in to supper; and very soon the lion came, and sat between his knees, and shared his food. Then Owain noticed that everyone in the

castle was very sorrowful. The Earl sat on one side of him, and his fair young daughter on the other; and he never saw anyone look as sad as they.

In the middle of supper the Earl began to bid Owain welcome, adding: "Heaven knows it is not thy coming which makes us sorrowful, but we have good cause for care."

"How is that?" asked Owain.

"I have two sons," replied the Earl, "who went yesterday to hunt upon the mountains. But on the mountains lives an evil monster who kills men and devours them, and he has seized my sons; and to-morrow he will bring them here, and will devour them before my eyes, unless I will deliver my sweet daughter into his hands. He has the form of a man, but the strength of a giant, and no one can do aught against him."

"Truly this is a hard case," said Owain. "And what wilt thou do?"

"Heaven knows," said the Earl. "But I can never give up my young daughter to be destroyed by him; yet I cannot bear to lose my two brave sons."

So no more was said, and Owain stayed there that night.

Next morning a great noise was heard as the giant entered the courtyard, dragging behind him the two youths by the hair of their heads. Then Owain put on his armour, and went out to fight the giant, and the lion followed him. The giant made a great rush upon the knight; and the lion fought on Owain's side, more fiercely than his master. At length the giant said: "I could easily settle this business with you were it not for the animal that is with you." So Owain shut the lion up inside the castle walls, and went back to fight the giant

as before. But the lion heard that it was going ill with Owain; and he roared very loud, and climbed up till he reached the top of the castle, and then sprang down from the walls, and joined his master. And very soon he gave the giant such a stroke with his paw that the monster fell down dead.

Then the Earl was full of gratitude, and begged Owain to remain with him; but he would only stay one more night, and on the morrow set out for the meadow where Luned was imprisoned in the mound. When he reached the spot, he found a great fire kindled, and two youths with curling auburn hair were leading the maiden forth to cast her in the fire.

"Why are you treating her thus?" asked Owain.

They told him of the compact that was between them concerning the maiden. "Owain has failed her," said they, "therefore she must be burnt according to our agreement."

"Well," said Owain, "I know him for a good knight, and if he had known of the maiden's peril he would have come to her rescue; but if you will accept me in his stead I will do battle for her."

This was agreed; and the fight began. But the two were together stronger than Owain, and he was hard beset. Then the lion came to his help, and they two were stronger than the young men. So they said to him: "Chieftain, we did not agree to fight with thy lion, but only with thee." Then Owain shut the lion up in the stone vault where the maiden had been imprisoned, and blocked up the entrance with stones, and returned to the fight. But he was weak from loss of blood, and the young men pressed hard upon him; and the lion roared like thunder when he

heard that his master was in trouble, and he burst through the wall, and rushed upon the young men, and slew them both.

So Luned was saved, and glad was she when she found it was Owain indeed who had come to her rescue. Together they sought the dominions of the Countess of the Fountain; and she and Owain and the lion and Luned lived all happily together for the rest of their lives.

From the "Mabinogion."

The Story of King Lud

KING LUD was King of Britain, and a very mighty warrior. He built for himself a fine castle, and lived in it most part of the year. It was called Caer Lud, and afterwards Caer London, but after the stranger race came to Britain it was just called London. Lud had a brother, Llevelys, whom he loved very dearly; and he married a princess of France, and became king of that land, and ruled it well and happily. Now, after some years three dismal plagues fell upon the island of Britain, such as no other land had ever known. The first was the plague of the Coranians. These Coranians were a certain people who knew every word that was said upon the island, however low it might be spoken, if only the wind met it. And because of this they could not be injured, for they knew all their enemies' plans beforehand.

The second plague was a terrible shriek that came on every May-eve over each hearth in the island of Britain. And the shriek pierced through the hearts of all, so that men lost their valour and strength, and women and children and young men and maidens their senses, and all the animals and trees and earth and waters were left barren.

The third plague was that whatever store of food and provisions might be laid up in the King's court, even if so

much as a whole year's supply of meat and drink, none of it could ever be found except what was consumed in the first night.

Then King Lud was very sad at heart, because he knew not how to free his land from the dismal plagues. He called together all the nobles of his kingdom, and asked counsel as to what he should do in the midst of these afflictions. And they all advised him to go to France and seek the advice of Llevelys his brother, king of that land. So they made ready a fleet in secrecy and silence, lest the Coranian race should learn the cause of their journey; and Lud, with some of his chosen followers, set his face towards France. When Llevelys saw his brother's ship approaching, he went out to meet him, and embraced him with much joy. Then King Lud told him the purpose of his errand; and King Llevelys thought a while, and, being very wise, soon discovered the cause of those dismal plagues. But they dared not talk freely about them to each other, lest the wind should catch their words, and the Coranians have knowledge of their discourse. So Llevelys caused a long horn to be made of brass, and through this horn they discoursed. But whatever words they spoke into the horn one to the other neither of them could hear anything but harsh and unfriendly words.

Then Llevelys saw that there was a demon in the horn thwarting all their purposes, and caused wine to be put in to wash it out; and through the virtue of the wine the demon was driven away.

When this was done, Llevelys told his brother through the horn that he would give him some insects, which he must take and bruise in water. And when he returned to his kingdom he must call together all the people, both

of his own race and the Coranians, as though with the idea of making peace between them. And when they were all together he must take the charmed water made with the bruised insects, and cast it over all alike. And the water would poison the race of the Coranians, but it would not harm those of his own people.

"The second plague," he said—"that of the weird shriek—is caused by a dragon. Another dragon of a foreign race is fighting with it, and striving to overcome it, and for this reason does your dragon make a fearful outcry once every year. This must you do to rid yourself of this plague: cause the island to be measured in its length and breadth, and in the place where you find the exact central point, cause a pit to be dug; and in the pit you must place a cauldron full of the best mead that can be made, with a covering of satin over the face of the cauldron. Then remain there watching, and presently you will see the dragons fighting a terrific fight. Presently they will take the form of dragons of the air; and lastly, when they are worn out with the fury of their fighting, they will fall upon the covering of the cauldron in the form of two pigs, and they will sink in, and the covering with them, till they reach the bottom of the cauldron; and they will drink up all the mead, and after that they will go to sleep. Then you must immediately fold the covering around them, and shut them up in the strongest vessel in your dominions, and hide them deep in the earth. And so long as they shall bide in that strong vessel no plague shall come from elsewhere upon the island of Britain.

"The third plague," continued Llevelys, "is caused by a mighty magician, who takes your meat and drink and stores of provisions. Through his illusions and

charms he causes everyone to sleep. Therefore must you watch your food yourself. And, lest he should overcome you with sleep, have a cauldron of ice-cold water by your side, and if you begin to get drowsy, plunge into the cauldron."

Then Lud thanked his brother for his good counsel, and returned to his own land. And first he summoned a meeting of all the people, both of his own race and that of the Coranians; and he bruised the insects in water, and cast it over the heads of all of them. Immediately it destroyed all the race of the Coranians, but his own people were hurt not at all.

And this was the end of the first dismal plague.

Then he caused the land to be measured in its length and its breadth; and he found the central point in Oxford, and in that place he caused the pit to be dug and the cauldron of mead to be placed, with a covering of satin over the face of it. There he presently beheld the dragons fighting; and when they were weary, they fell into the mead under the shape of pigs, and when they had drunk up all the mead, they slept. And Lud folded the covering round them, and hid them in the strongest place he had on Snowdon. And so the fierce shriek ceased to be heard in his dominions; and this was the end of the second dismal plague.

When this was all ended, King Lud caused a very great banquet to be prepared in the Court. And when it was ready, he placed a cauldron of ice-cold water by his side, and sat down to watch over the banquet. And about the third watch of the night he heard sweet music and gentle songs, which lulled him to sleep. But when he found himself getting very drowsy, he went often into the ice-cold

water. At length a man of great size, clad in strong, heavy armour, came in, bearing a hamper ; and into this hamper he began to put all the food and provisions of meat and drink, and proceeded to go forth with it. And King Lud was so stupefied with astonishment that one hamper could possibly hold so much, that he had almost let him go. At last, however, he recovered his senses, and rushed after him, and cried : "Stay, stay. Though thou hast done me many insults and stolen much spoil ere now, yet shalt thou do so no more, unless thy skill in arms be better than mine." The magician instantly put down the hamper, and rushed upon him ; and they fought so desperately that fire flew from their arms. At length the victory was to Lud, and he threw the plague to the earth. Then the magician besought him for his life, and promised to serve him as his vassal, and put all his power in the hands of the King, if he would release him ; and to this King Lud agreed.

And this was the end of the third dismal plague. From that time forth King Lud reigned in peace and happiness in the island of Britain.

From the "Mabinogion."

The Tale of Taliesin

TEGID VOEL and Caridwen his wife lived on an island in the midst of Lake Tegid. [Nowadays the lake is called Bala, and there is no island to be seen.] They had an elder son, a fair and comely youth, and a very beautiful daughter; but their youngest son was uglier than anyone in the whole world. This troubled his mother Caridwen at first; but she said to herself: "If he cannot be handsome, he shall, at anyrate, be very learned." Now, Caridwen was a witch, so she set to work to boil a Cauldron of Knowledge, of which the boiling must not cease for a year and a day. At the end of that time it would yield three drops of precious liquid, which would make whoever drank it wise for the rest of his life. She set Gwion Bach, who was passing by, to stir the cauldron, and a blind man named Morda to keep up the fire underneath; but, fearing that Gwion Bach had seen what she put into the cauldron, and would tell her secrets to others, she made up her mind to kill him directly he had done his work for her.

Now, one day, as the end of the year drew nigh, while Caridwen was in the fields gathering herbs, it chanced that the three magic drops flew out of the cauldron, and fell on the finger of Gwion Bach. They scalded his hand so that he promptly put it to his mouth, and sucked his

fingers; and immediately he became very wise, and knew all that Caridwen meant to do to him, and his need of guarding against her wily plots. He fled from the house, therefore, and ran towards his own land; and the cauldron, left unstirred, burst in two, and the poisonous liquid ran out of the door, and into a stream where the horses of Gwyddno were drinking; and when they had drunk of the poisoned water they all died.

When Caridwen returned, and saw the year's work was lost, she took up a billet of wood, and began to beat the blind man Morda. But he answered: "You do wrong to beat me; the loss was not because of me."

"You speak truly," said Caridwen. "It was Gwion Bach who robbed me." And she set to running after him as fast as she could. He soon looked back, and saw her, and changed himself into a hare; for the magic liquid had given him many different kinds of skill. But as he fled, she changed herself into a greyhound, and had nearly caught him up when he ran towards a river and changed himself into a fish. Then she became an otter, and chased him till in his weariness he took the form of a bird. But she at once changed herself into a hawk, and gave him no rest in the sky.

Just as he was in fear of death, he saw a heap of grains of wheat on the floor of a barn; so he dropped among them, and became one of the grains. Then Caridwen changed herself into a high-crested black hen, and scratched among the grains till she found him. She was just about to swallow him, when, with his last remaining effort of skill, he became a very beautiful little child, and when she looked at him she had not the heart to kill him on the spot. So she took her own form again, and, having put

the child into a leathern bag, she cast him into the sea just below the weir of Gwyddno, which is not far from Aberystwith, on the 29th of April. Then Caridwen returned home again, and thought no more of the matter.

Now, it had been the custom on every May-day eve to go fishing in that weir, and every year fish were taken to the value of a hundred pounds. Its owner, Gwyddno, had an only son named Elphin, the most unlucky of youths, who was always needing and never getting. This year his father, pitying his ill fortune, granted to him all the weir should contain on May-day, in order to give him something wherewith to begin the world. So the nets were set to catch the fish below the weir, and next day Elphin hurried to see how many they had caught. But the nets were quite empty, and nothing was to be found but a leathern bag which had caught in one of the poles of the weir. Then said one of his companions: "Men were unfortunate before, but never so much as now, when your luck has turned away the fish from a weir that has been worth a hundred pounds every May-eve till now, when there is nothing but a skin in it."

"Perhaps," said Elphin, "the bag may have something in it which is worth a hundred pounds." So his friend hooked up the bag, and opened it, and there peeped out the bright face of a little lad. "See, what a bright face within the bag!" cried his companion. And Elphin said: "Let him be called Taliesin, then" (which means "bright or shining face"), and lifted the child gently on to his horse, and made it walk softly, and went homeward with a very heavy heart.

But as he rode along, the boy behind him sang to him a song of consolation so sweetly that Elphin was much

amazed, and asked how he had learnt so beautiful a song. The child replied that, though he was very little, he was notwithstanding very wise.

Then Elphin asked if he were a mortal child or a spirit; upon which the boy sang another song, telling what he had been, and how he had fled from Caridwen, and how he came to be entangled in the weir.

When Elphin reached the house of his father, the latter asked him if his haul were good.

"Father," he answered, "I have caught a poet-minstrel."

"Alas! what good will that do thee?" said Gwyddno.

And Taliesin answered for himself: "He will do him more good than the weir ever did for thee."

Then Gwyddno looked at him, and said: "Art thou able to speak when thou art so little?" And the child replied: "I am better able to speak than thou to question." "What canst thou say?" asked Gwyddno. Upon which Taliesin sang a song of such wondrous beauty, that everyone hastened to the spot to hear the marvellous child.

Soon afterwards Elphin, with his usual ill luck, managed to offend the powerful King Maelgwn, who cast him into a dungeon barred by thirteen locked doors. But when father Gwyddno was lamenting his son's ill fate, the child Taliesin bade him be of good cheer, since he was going to rescue him. Setting off at daybreak he reached the King's palace at the time of the evening meal, and entered the hall just as the bards were beginning to sing the praises of the King, as was their custom every evening. Then Taliesin cast a spell upon these bards, so that instead of singing they could only pout out their lips and make mouths

at the King. He forced them also, by his magic power, to tap their fingers on their mouths, as they tried in vain to sing, making a curious sound like " Bler-m ! Bler-m ! "

The King, naturally, thought they were treating him with great disrespect, and ordered one of his squires to give a blow to the chief bard ; and the squire took a broom, and struck him on the head, so that he fell back on his seat. This rough treatment seemed to bring him to his senses, and he then explained that they could not help themselves, but had been put under a spell by a spirit, who was sitting in a corner of the hall under the form of a child. So the King ordered the squire to fetch the child ; and Taliesin, nothing loth, was brought up to the head of the table. Being asked who he was and whence he came, he at once proceeded to sing another wonderful song, in which he informed them that he was the chief bard of Elphin, that his native country was the land of Cherubim, but that at present he was dwelling upon this earth, and might even stay here until the Judgment Day.

The King and his nobles marvelled greatly, for they had never heard the like from a boy so young as he. But as he was the bard of Elphin, who had offended His Majesty, the King determined that his own bards should get the better of him in song. So he ordered the chief bard to stand forth, and then all the four and twenty of them, to strive with Taliesin. But when they came forward to do his bidding they could do no other than play " Bler-m ! Bler-m ! " on their lips.

Then the King, angry and disappointed, asked the boy Taliesin his errand.

And the child replied in song : " I am come to deliver Elphin, who is imprisoned in this castle, behind thirteen locks."

" I will never let him go," said the King.

Then Taliesin foretold that there should come up from the sea-marshes a wonderful golden worm, which would take revenge upon the King for his cruelty ; but, finding his threat had no effect, he turned, and left the hall. Outside the castle he sang a charm to the wind, bidding it blow open the prison of Elphin ; and while he thus sang, near the door, there suddenly uprose such a storm of wind that the King and his nobles crouched in terror, expecting that the castle would fall upon their heads. Directly he realised that this was the work of the mysterious child-bard he sent for Elphin from the prison, and implored Taliesin to stay the wind-storm, which he accordingly did. So Elphin was brought into the hall, loaded with chains ; at sight of which Taliesin sang another charm song, and the chains immediately fell off his hands and feet. By this time the King was so full of admiration for the skill and wisdom of the boy that he begged him to take the spell off his own bards, and to test them with questions.

So Taliesin set them free from his charm, and then began to rain questions upon them.

" Why is a stone hard ? "

" Why is a thorn sharp-pointed ? "

" What is as salt as brine ? "

" Who rides the gale ? "

" Why is a wheel round ? "

" Why is the speech of the tongue different from any other gift ? "

These were some of the questions he put, and ended with : " If you and your bards are able, let them give an answer to me, Taliesin."

But none of them could answer a single word.

Then the King dismissed them all with scorn ; but still he would not let Elphin go free away.

Then Taliesin bade Elphin wager the King that he had a horse both better and swifter than the King's horses. The King accepted the challenge, and fixed day and time and place for the wager to be tried, and promised him his freedom if he should win the race. The King went thither with all his people and four and twenty of the swiftest horses he possessed. The course was marked out and the horses placed for running. Then came Taliesin with four and twenty twigs of holly, which he had burnt black, and he bade the youth who was to ride his master's horse to place them in his belt. Then he ordered him to let all the King's horses get before him, and, as he should overtake one horse after another, to strike the horse with a holly twig over the crupper, and then let that twig fall, and then to take another twig, and do the same to every one of the horses as he should overtake them.

Moreover, he bade the horseman to watch carefully where his own horse should stumble, and to throw down his cap on the spot. All this was done, and, behold ! each horse that was struck with the holly twig began to lag behind, and the horse of Elphin easily won the race. When all was over, Taliesin brought his master to the spot where his horse had stumbled, and ordered workmen to dig a hole there ; and when they had dug deep enough they found a cauldron full of gold. Then said Taliesin :

"Elphin, take thou this as a reward for having taken me out of the weir and reared me from that time until now."

So Elphin went home a rich man to his father, and the work of Taliesin was accomplished.

From the Welsh Romance of Taliesin. Thirteenth century.

Olger the Dane

I. HOW OLGER BECAME CHAMPION OF FRANCE

LONG ago, in the days when Denmark and England were almost like one country, the palace of the King of the Danes was dark and gloomy, and the sound of weeping and wailing rose within its walls ; for the fair young queen, whom all the people loved, had died in giving birth to a son. When she was dead, they took the babe from her arms, and, having called him Olger, they carried him away to the royal nursery, and laid him on a quilted bed of down, and left him there alone. But ere long a sound of rustling was heard in the silent room, and there assembled round the bed six beautiful fairies, who smiled and kissed their hands to him ; and the babe smiled back in return.

Then the Fairy Glorian took the child in her arms, and kissed him, and said : " My gift to you is that you shall be the strongest and bravest knight of all your time."

" And mine," said the Fairy Palestine, " is that you shall always have battles to fight."

" No man shall ever conquer you," promised the Fairy Pharamond.

" You shall ever be sweet and gentle," said Meliora.

And Pristina added : " You shall be dear to all women, and happy in your love."

Then Morgan le Fay, who was queen of all the fairies, took the boy in her arms, and pressed his head to her bosom, saying: "Sweet little one, there are few gifts for me to give you; but this shall be mine: You shall never die; and after you have lived a life of glory here you shall be mine, and shall dwell with me for ever in Avalon, the land of Faery." Then she kissed him many times, and laid him back upon the bed; and with soft rustling of wings the fays departed.

Ten years passed away, and Olger had grown a brave, strong boy, and comely to look upon.

At that time it befell that the Emperor Charles the Great sent a message to Godfrey, King of Denmark, and father of young Olger, to bid him come and do homage for his lands; to which King Godfrey, being a stout and stalwart man, made bold answer: "Tell Charles I hold my lands of God and of my good sword; and if he doubt it, let him come and see. Homage to him I will not do." So Charles the Great came up against him with a mighty army, and after long fighting King Godfrey was defeated, and forced to promise to appear before the Emperor every Easter to do allegiance. And, fearing lest he would not keep his word, the Emperor demanded that young Olger should be given to him as a hostage. To this King Godfrey agreed; and the boy was carried off to the Emperor's Court, and there instructed in all the arts and learning of the time, and so grew up an accomplished and handsome youth.

For three years King Godfrey appeared each Easter to do allegiance; but in the meantime he had married again. And when another son was born to him, his new wife persuaded him to cease to humble himself before the

Emperor, for she hoped that by this means Olger would be put to death, and her own son would inherit the kingdom. So on the fourth Easter the King of Denmark appeared not at the Court; and so they took young Olger, and threw him into the prison of the Castle of St Omer, until messengers should find out why King Godfrey had broken his pledged word.

Now, the keeper of the castle was very good to the young man, who also found much favour in the eyes of his wife, and those of Bellisande, his daughter, who loved him from the first moment he appeared.

Instead of a gloomy dungeon Olger was placed in a rich apartment, hung with beautiful tapestry, and Bellisande herself was proud to wait upon him.

Meantime the messengers of Charles had met with a shameful reception at the hands of Godfrey, King of Denmark. Their ears and noses were slit, their heads shaven, and they were driven from the kingdom. Full of shame and wrath they appeared at the Court of their master, and cried loudly for revenge against Godfrey, and against his son Olger, since he stood as hostage for him. The Emperor at once gave orders that the lad should be put to death; but the keeper of the castle implored the Emperor not to insist upon instant execution, but at least to grant that the young knight should be brought before the Court and told why he must suffer death. To this the Emperor agreed; and as he sat at a great feast among his nobles there entered Olger, and kneeled meekly at his feet. When Charles saw how fair a youth he was, and how gently he humbled himself for his father's pride, he was moved with pity and compassion. Many of the nobles, too, were in favour of the lad, and would have

begged the Emperor to save his life ; but the rage of the messengers was so great that they would have torn him to pieces, had not Duke Naymes of Bayiere kept them back.

Then Olger looked up at the Emperor, and said :

" Sire, you know that I am innocent in this matter, and that I have always been obedient to you. Let me not suffer for my father's fault, but, since I am his true heir, let me pay the homage and allegiance which he refuses, and grant that I may atone for him by a life of devotion and service in your cause. And for your messengers, I will from this moment do all in my power to recompense them for the cruel indignities they have suffered at my father's hands, if you will but spare my life and use it in your service."

Then all the barons began to beg the King to grant the boy's request ; and in the midst of the discussion a mounted knight rode into the hall, crying :

" Tidings, my lord King ! Ill tidings for us all ! The Soudan and the Grand Turk and Dannemont his son, with the help of King Caraheu, have taken Rome by storm, and Pope, cardinals, and all have fled. The churches are destroyed ; the Christians put to the sword. Wherefore, as a Christian king and pillar of the Faith, I summon you to march to the aid of Holy Church."

Then, as all was bustle and confusion in preparing a great army to take the field immediately, Duke Naymes prevailed upon Charles to let him take young Olger to the battle as his squire, promising to give all his lands, and himself as prisoner, to the Emperor, if the boy should flee away. So Charles agreed, and hastened to prepare for the fight, swearing that he would not return to his own land till Rome should be restored to the Christians. The

first thing Olger did when he recovered his freedom, was to hasten back to the castle and wed the fair Bellisande; and when she wept at losing her young husband so soon, he comforted her, and said: "Weep not, for God has given me life and you have given me love—and these two gifts will strengthen me to do great feats of arms."

So Olger rode off with the host, following the standard of Duke Naymes and his two brothers, Geoffrey and Gautier. And they marched till they came to Rome, and took their station on a hill before the city with an army of two hundred thousand men.

Then the host of paynims came forth from the city to the battle; and Olger, hearing the din of war, the neighing of horses, and the shouting of men, longed to dash into the thick of the fight; but his master forbade him, and charged him to remain among the tents.

From this position Olger watched with wild anxiety the standard of King Charles as it waved in the forefront of the battle. He saw the armies come together and heard a crash that rent the sky. Then the standard waved in triumph; but suddenly it fell—then rose again; and anon he saw with horror that the band of the Emperor's chosen knights had been repulsed, and that Sir Alory, the standard-bearer, had turned his horse, and was fleeing for his very life. In a moment Olger had rushed down the slope, and, flinging himself on the bridle of Sir Alory's horse, he snatched the standard from his hand, crying: "Coward, go home with all the speed you may, and live among women for the rest of your life, but leave the noble banner, Refuge of France, with me."

The terrified Alory was easily disarmed; and Olger, ordering a squire to dress him in the standard-bearer's

armour, sprang on a horse and, sword in one hand and banner in the other, rushed into the thick of the fight.

He soon found that Duke Naymes and many other nobles had been held prisoners behind the array of the paynims, and, with the fierceness of a young lion, he cut his way through to them, cut their bonds with his sword, and forced a way through the enemy both for himself and for them. And wherever he appeared among the heathen host, he slew so many that he was protected, as it were, by a rampart of the dead. Presently he heard the King cry loudly for help, and, spurring in the direction of the sound, found that Dannemont had killed his horse under him, and that he was down, and hard pressed on every side. Then Olger, waving the standard on high, rushed upon the paynim, and soon cleared a free space about the King, and mounted him on a fresh horse. And in the same way on three separate occasions he saved the life of Charles. At length, with Olger at their head and the battle-cry of " Montjoy " on their lips, the King and his host drove the paynim back to the city gates.

When the fight was over, the Emperor Charles ordered the standard-bearer to be brought before him ; and when Olger appeared, with his visor closed, he thought it had been Alory, and said to him : " Alory, though with grief I saw you flee at the onset, you have most nobly redeemed your honour. Three times have you saved my life, and I know not how to reward you fitly. I will make you ruler of any province you may choose in my kingdom, and you shall be my lieutenant, and fight in my quarrel in all disputes touching the crown of France."

But a squire who stood by spoke up, and said : " Sire, this is not that Alory of whom you speak. He bowed the

colours, and fled for his life, at the first onset; but this young knight seized the standard from his hands, while I helped to dress him in Alory's armour; but who he is I know not."

Then Olger took off his helmet, and knelt down, and said: "Have pity, sire, on Godfrey, King of Denmark, and let his son atone for his offence and be your faithful vassal in his stead."

And the Emperor embraced him, and said: "You have changed all former hate into love for you. I give you your request. Rise, Sir Olger, Champion for France and Charles, and God be with you."

Thus Olger became a knight, and all the nobles of France came to salute him and thank him for their deliverance. On the next day, proud in his new-made knighthood, Olger once more bore the standard against the foe, and the paynim fell like corn before the scythe wherever he appeared. And when the Franks began to waver, then there rode into their midst a knight on a great horse, who did such mighty deeds on their behalf that they knew him for their Champion, and crying: "Olger! Olger the Dane!" they made many a mighty charge upon the foe.

When Sadonne, the paynim general, heard that the tide of battle was going against his army, he rode forth to meet his followers with the news that Caraheu, Emperor of India, with thirty kings, was coming to their aid. But soon he met the whole array fleeing, panic-stricken, towards him in full flight, and crying, "Save yourselves, for Michael the Archangel fights against us!" Then, before Sadonne had time to flee, his path was crossed by the dread knight on the great horse, and at once he threw down his arms, and begged for life.

"What is your name?" said Sir Olger.

"I am Sadonne," answered he, "the general of Caraheu, Emperor of India."

"On one condition only will I grant you your life," said Sir Olger: "You must bear to Caraheu my challenge to fight with me in single combat, so that by this the course of the war may be determined."

So Sadonne departed, and next day Caraheu arrived at the pavilion of Charles the Emperor with a gorgeous retinue, and with him he brought the beautiful Gloriande, the fairest lady in all the Eastern world. Her hair was like spun gold, and fell to her feet like a cloak. It was bound about her temples by a jewelled circlet of the rarest gems, and her dress, of whitest damask sewn with pearls, had taken full nine years to weave.

Then Caraheu the Emperor said: "I am in search of Olger the Dane, who has demanded single combat with me. His challenge I accept, and fair Gloriande, my promised bride, shall be the victor's prize."

But Charlot, son of the Emperor Charles, looked with envy on Olger, and said: "'Tis meet that you, great Caraheu, should fight, not with my father's bondsman, but with me."

"Not I," replied the Emperor. "I fight not with braggarts, but with men. Sir Olger rules the hearts of men, which is nobler far than ruling over lands."

"Nay, Emperor," said Olger modestly; "Charlot here is the Emperor's son, and worthy to fight with the highest."

"Let him fight with Sadonne, my general," said Caraheu. "I will joust only with you."

So a double combat was arranged, and Gloriande sat in a place from which she could strengthen the combatants

with the glances of her bright eyes. For half a day they fought without either getting the upper hand, until Sadonne killed Charlot's horse, and courteously leapt from his own in order to fight upon equal terms. But the base-minded Charlot only pretended to fight until he reached the place where Sadonne's steed was standing, and, leaping on it, he rode away, like a coward and recreant knight.

Meantime the good sword of Caraheu had cut through Sir Olger's shield and armour, and would have done worse harm had not the knight with his great strength dragged Caraheu from his horse, and disarmed him. But Dannemont, the paynim, had hidden three hundred men among the bushes of that place to see how the combat went. And when he saw Caraheu at Olger's mercy, he rushed forth at the head of his men, and began to attack the knight. In vain did Caraheu rail at them for their treachery, and fight with all his strength on Olger's side, crying: "Shame on ye, traitors! Better death than this!" Numbers overpowered them, and Olger's life was only saved at the request of the fair Gloriande. He was loaded with chains, and thrown into a dungeon, in spite of all that Caraheu could say or do on his behalf. At length, angry and disgusted at this foul blot on his honour, the latter left the paynim army, and went over with all his men to the side of the Emperor Charles, determined to go on fighting against the paynim until Olger was delivered. But Gloriande, who, according to the fairy gift, had loved Olger from the first moment she saw him, went in secret to his prison, loosed his chains, and let him escape to the camp of Charles. Then Charles and Olger and Caraheu joined together against the paynim host, and ere long Rome was freed from her enemies. Then Olger rescued

Gloriande, and gave her to Caraheu to be his wife. In Rome were they baptised and married, and returned to India a Christian man and woman. But ere he departed, he gave to Olger his famous sword, Courtain, saying: "My life and my bride both have you won, and both you have given back to me; take, therefore, this sword as a pledge that I owe all to you."

II. THE VENGEANCE OF OLGER

When Olger returned to France he found that his wife was dead. This grieved him very sorely, but he was comforted somewhat by the sight of the little son who had been born to him meantime. And he called his name Baldwin.

Now, at this time the paynim had come down upon Denmark, and had harried all the land. And they shut up King Godfrey in his own castle, and besieged it so that he nearly died of famine. Then the Queen said: "Surely this trouble is come upon us for Olger's sake, whom we left to die." And they began to repent of their wickedness, until at length, becoming very low and miserable, they sent a message to King Charles, begging him to forgive them, and to send them help. But the Emperor replied: "No! Since Godfrey holds his lands of God and of his good sword, let him hold them. I will not lift a hand to help him." Then he sent for Olger, and said: "You would not wish to help a traitor—one, too, who left you to die for his crimes?" But Olger knelt before the King, and said: "Sire, as vassal I kneel here before my King; but Godfrey is my father, and my duty is to go to his aid. Surely the King will not forbid a son his duty!"

Then Charles was moved, and said: "Go; but go alone, save with your body-servants. No man of mine shall fight in the cause of a rebel and traitor."

Then Olger hurried to his father's castle with thirty of his men; but ere he could reach it, King Godfrey had been slain by his foes, and they were even then fighting over his body when Olger rode up.

It was not long before Olger, with his good sword Courtain, had scattered these paynim far and wide, and soon after they left the country in despair of conquering such a hero. Then Olger was made King of Denmark, and ruled there for five years; and when he had settled the land and made good laws, he returned to the Emperor Charles, and, kneeling before him, said: "The son of Godfrey, of his own free will, thus pays homage to King Charles for all the land of Denmark."

The King embraced him warmly at these words, and begged him to remain as long as possible at the Frankish Court. Now, one day the little Baldwin, Olger's son, a fair-headed child whom all good men looked upon with favour, was playing chess with Charlot, son of the Emperor; and it came to pass that, having quickly given "fool's mate" to the prince, the boy began to laugh at him for his bad play. Then Charlot, who had always hated Olger, and was jealous of young Baldwin, took up the heavy chessboard, and beat the child on the head, so that he fell lifeless to the ground.

When Olger returned from the hunt and found his little son lying dead, he was beside himself with grief. He covered the child with tears and kisses, and then, making his way to the Emperor's presence, he laid the boy before his throne, saying:

"Sire, look upon your son's foul deed."

The Emperor was sorely grieved; but he tried to comfort Olger, saying he would give half his kingdom if it would bring the child to life again, but that he knew well that nothing could make up for such a loss.

Then Olger said very sternly: "There is no compensation, but there is punishment to be given. Grant me now to fight with your son, and so avenge my poor child's death."

"Nay," said the Emperor; "for how, then, could he have a chance of life?"

"What matters that?" cried Olger, with bitter look. "What is your son more than mine? I demand that he be given up to me."

"I cannot do it," said the Emperor.

"Then," cried Olger in great wrath, "till you learn justice, sire, we part company." And forthwith he left the Court, and took service with a Lombard king who was fighting against King Charles.

For the next few years Olger the Dane won great renown by his warfare against the Franks, for wherever he went he was always the victor, and his enemies began to look upon his good sword Courtain, and Broiefort, his great black steed, with awe and terror. Many of the Franks said openly, that to let Olger depart and to make him their foe, had been no wise deed, for he came upon them like a blight upon the summer corn. At length they made a plot against him, and determined to get the better of him by foul treachery. So they watched him privily, and found him one day, tired out with fighting, lying fast asleep by a fountain, with his arms scattered far and wide, and his good steed Broiefort grazing peace-

fully by his side. Then one seized his horse, and another his weapons, and they bound him fast while he still lay sound asleep.

When Sir Olger was brought to the Court as a prisoner, the Emperor wished to slay him, because he feared the vengeance of Olger on his son, and in return for the harm he had done to the Frankish cause. But the knights and barons would not hear of this, saying that they had lent themselves to treachery to save their native land, but that the life of the noblest knight in Christendom should not be lost thereby. So he was put into prison, and kept under a strong guard for several years.

Now, after these days did Achar, King of England, land in France to do homage to the Emperor for his lands; and with him came his fair daughter Clarice. But as he journeyed to the Court a certain Saracen giant named Bruhier arrived with a great army to make war upon the Franks, and he seized the persons of Achar and his daughter, and marched to fight against the Emperor. And so great was the power of this giant that the Frankish army could not stand before him, but fled before his face. Then the barons and knights began to implore Charles to release Olger from his prison and prevail on him to fight for them, and forthwith the Emperor went himself to the prison to implore his aid. But Olger would not listen for a moment to this proposal, unless the Emperor would first deliver Charlot the prince into his hands. For a long time the Emperor would not agree to this; but at length his whole army reproached him, saying: "Have you no care for us that you let us die by thousands in a hopeless fight? Why should a thousand die for one?"

So Charles was forced to deliver up his son.

Then, as Charlot begged and prayed for mercy, Olger thought only of his fair-haired little boy, and, taking the prince by the hair, raised Courtain to strike off his head. But as he did so a voice from the air cried: "Stay thy hand, Olger the Dane! Slay not the son of the King!" and at the same moment vivid flashes of lightning came about them both. Then the sword fell from Olger's hand, and all who had heard the voice trembled and greatly feared. The King, in his joy at the deliverance of his son, would have poured out his gratitude to the Dane; but Olger only said: "Your thanks are due to God, not to me. I do but bow to His will." And that day the King and Olger were made friends.

But when the Dane would have made ready to fight against the Saracen, he found that nothing had been heard or seen of his good horse Broiefort for seven long years, and all men believed him to be dead. The Emperor sent him his best charger in his stead, but scarcely had the knight leaped into the saddle when the creature fell beneath his weight. Ten other of the finest horses in the land were tried, and, finding that none could carry him, Olger declared that he must go afoot. But a certain man was found who said he had seen the horse Broiefort dragging blocks of stone for the building of the Abbey of St Meaux, and immediately a little band rode off to bring the horse back to his master. They found him but skin and bone, his hair worn off his sides, his tail shorn to the stump, his skin galled by the shafts, a very scarecrow of a horse, yet dragging a load that four other horses could not stir. They brought him to Olger with all speed; and when the sturdy knight leaned upon him, he did

not cringe under the weight, but straightened himself, and, knowing his master, snorted and neighed with joy, and pawed the ground, and knelt down humbly before him on the grass.

So Olger went to battle upon Broiefort, and wherever he went he won the day. He slew the giant Bruhier, drove the Saracen from the land, and rescued King Achar, and his daughter Clarice, whom the King of Britain gave him for his wife. And when they were married, they crossed the sea, and Achar made Olger King of Britain in his stead. For many years he ruled this country, and there his faithful Broiefort died and was buried. At length he grew weary of peace, and went to fight for the Holy Cross in Palestine ; and there he fought many a hard battle, and won many a victory, till he was old and grey with years. Then he left the Holy Land, and set sail for France that he might see Charles the Great and his Court once more before he returned to Britain, there to end his days.

But on that journey there came upon them a great storm ; and the tempestuous wind drove the ship in which Olger was far away from the rest, into strange seas, without rudder, oars, or mast ; and a strong current seized the vessel, and crashed it against a reef of loadstone rock. All who were on board leaped into the waves, and were soon dashed lifeless against the beach ; only Sir Olger remained upon the deck in the black darkness, gazing out upon the stormy sea. He bared his head, and, drawing Courtain, kissed the crossed hilt, and thanked God for the courage given him as a soldier all his life, and then quietly awaited death.

III. THE RETURN FROM AVALON

Darker and wilder grew the night, when, just as the waves seemed about to overwhelm the ship, a voice from the air cried, clear and strong: "Olger, I wait for thee. Come, and fear not the waves." And immediately he cast himself into the sea, and was borne on the crest of a great billow high up in the air, and placed in safety among the rocks. A weird light shone through the gloom, and showed a narrow pathway through the crags, and, following this, Olger presently saw a brilliant glow in front of him, which gradually took the shape of a shining palace, which none can see by day, but which at nightfall glows with unearthly splendour. Its walls were of ivory, inlaid with gold and ebony, and within its spacious hall was set a most rare banquet upon a golden table. But the only inhabitant of the palace was a fairy horse named Papillon, who signed to Olger to seat himself at the banquet, and brought him water in a golden pitcher for his hands, and served him at table while he ate. When he had finished, Papillon carried him off to a bed, in the pillars of which stood golden candlesticks, wherein wax tapers burned the whole night through.

So Olger slept; but when he awoke next day, the fairy palace had vanished in the morning light, and he found himself lying in a fair garden, where the trees were always green and the flowers unfading and the summer never comes to an end, where no storm ever darkens the sweet, soft sky, and the chill of sunset is not known. For it was a garden in the vale of Avalon, in Fairyland.

And as he gazed around him, greatly wondering, there

Olger in the Enchanted Garden

appeared at his side Morgan le Fay, Queen of the Fairies, clothed in shining white apparel, and said to him: "Welcome, dear knight, to Avalon. Long have I waited and wearied for your coming. Now you are mine for ever. The ages may roll away, and the world fall to pieces; we will dream for ever in this vale, where all things are the same." Then she put an enchanted ring on his finger, and immediately he became a youth again, beautiful and vigorous. And on his head she placed a crown of myrtle leaves and laurel, all in gold; and Olger remembered no more his former life, for she had given him the Crown of Forgetfulness.

So Olger sojourned in that fair land; and there he met and talked with King Arthur, healed now of his mortal wound, and the forms of Sir Lancelot and Sir Tristram and of many other noble knights of the Table Round.

And so two hundred years passed by like a beautiful dream.

Meantime sad events had taken place in the land of France. No great leader had arisen after Charles the Great, and the land had fallen into poverty and shame. Everywhere the Franks were beaten back by Paynim and by Saracen, and chivalry seemed lost for ever. In vain the people cried out for a deliverer; and at length Morgan le Fay heard and pitied them. So she went to Olger the Dane, and said to him:

"Dear knight, how long have you dwelt here with me?"

"It may be a week, a month, or perchance a year," he answered, smiling, "for I have lost all count of time."

Then Morgan le Fay lifted the Crown of Forgetfulness from his brows, and at once his memory came to him again.

"I must go back," he cried, as though awaking from sleep. "Too long have I tarried here. Clarice will be calling for me, and Charles, my master, will have summoned Olger in vain. Where is my sword, my horse? Now let me go, fair queen, but tell me first how long I have dwelt here."

"It seems not long to me, dear knight," said she; "but you shall go when you will."

Then Morgan le Fay brought to life again his dead squire Benoist, and brought out Courtain, his good sword, and led forth Papillon for his steed. "Keep safe the ring upon your hand," said she, "for so long as you wear it, youth and vigour shall not fail you. And take also this torch, but see you light it not, for so long as it remains unlighted your life is safe; but, if ever it should begin to burn, guard the flame well, for with the last spark of the torch shall your days end."

She wove, moreover, a spell about them, so that they fell into a deep sleep. And when Sir Olger awoke, he found himself lying by a fountain, with his sword and armour near by, and Benoist holding Papillon ready for him to mount. Leaping on their horses, they rode along till, not far from a town, they overtook a horseman.

"What city is this, good sir?" asked Olger.

"Montpellier," answered the man.

"Ah, yes; I had forgotten," said Olger. "Yet I ought to know well enough, for a kinsman of mine is governor there." And he named the man whom he believed to be the governor.

"You are strangely in error," said the horseman, "though I remember now to have heard there was a ruler of that name two hundred years ago. He was a

great writer of romances, and I daresay you know, since you claim him as your ancestor, that he wrote the romance of Olger the Dane. A good story enough, though, of course, no one believes it now, save perhaps one man, who often sings it about the city, and picks up money from the passers-by." Then he fell back a few paces, and riding beside Benoist, said to him : "Who is your master ? "

"Surely you must know him," said the squire ; "he is Olger the Dane."

"Rascal ! " cried the stranger, "you are making a jest of me. All men know that Olger the Dane perished in shipwreck two hundred years ago. That is a fine story indeed ! " And he rode away.

The knight and his squire pursued their journey till they came to the market-place of Meaux, where they stopped at the door of an inn well known to them in former days.

"Can we lodge here ? " asked Olger.

"Certainly you can," replied the innkeeper.

"Then fetch the landlord to speak with me."

"Sir," said the man, "I am the landlord."

"Nay, nay," said Olger ; "I wish to see Hubert the Neapolitan, the landlord of this house."

The man gave him one look, and then, taking him for a madman, bolted the door in his face, and, rushing to an upper window, cried : "Seize that horseman for a madman. He asks to see Hubert, my grandfather's grandfather, who has been dead two hundred years. Send for the Abbot of St Faron, that he may drive out the evil spirit from him."

Then a crowd began to gather, and stones and darts were

hurled at the knight and his man, and in the scuffle that followed Benoist was shot dead by an archer. And when Sir Olger saw that, he was filled with the fiercest wrath, and rode Papillon at the crowd, and scattered them, cutting down with his sword all who came within reach. But so hotly burnt his wrath that it kindled the torch that he carried in his breast, so he rode away with it to the Abbey of St Faron. There the Abbot met him, to whom Olger said: "Is your name Simon? You at least should know me, seeing that I founded this abbey and endowed it with lands and money." But the Abbot answered that he knew little of those who had preceded him, and asked the stranger's name. And when he heard it he was greatly puzzled, and said to himself: "I do remember me that the charters of the house say that Simon was Abbot in the days of the founder, Olger the Dane; yet what does all this mean?" And aloud he said: "Sir Knight, the Abbot Simon has been buried for nigh two hundred years."

"What!" cried the knight. "Simon dead! And Charles the Great and Caraheu and Clarice, my wife? Where are they? Not dead too? Oh, say they are not dead!"

"Dead—dead two hundred years ago, my son," said the Abbot solemnly. Then Sir Olger was filled with awe and wonder, as he began to realise that his dream of Avalon was true after all. Following the Abbot into the church he told his strange story; and the Abbot believed him, and rejoiced to think that a deliverer had been sent to France at last. Then Olger told him the secret of the torch, and begged him to make an iron treasure-house beneath the church, wherein so little air could come that

the flame might dwindle to a single spark, and yet be nourished and preserved for many years to come. And when this was done, and the torch was safely disposed of, the Abbot begged to see the magic ring. But when Olger heedlessly drew it from his finger, immediately his youth and vigour vanished, and he became a helpless old man, whose skin hung loose like withered parchment, and whose only sign of life was the quivering of his toothless jaws. The terrified Abbot hastily put back the ring on the fleshless finger, and immediately Olger's strength and youth returned, and he rode off on Papillon to fight for France. The enemy was then stationed before Chartres, and so strong they were that the Franks were falling back disheartened before them, when suddenly, just as in former days, a gigantic knight riding a coal-black horse appeared in their midst, and everywhere he rode was marked by a long line of slain. Then the astonished Franks remembered the stories they had heard in the days of old, and murmured to one another: "It is Olger the Dane!" One after the other passed it on, till the murmur grew to a cry, and the cry to a shout of "Olger! Olger the Dane!" and, rushing upon the foe, they swept the paynims from the field. Over and over again did Olger thus lead the Franks to victory, until at length the land was free. And always while he fought the torch burnt bright in the Church of St Faron, but when he rested it dwindled to a spark again.

At length the renowned and glorious knight had leisure to visit the French Court. He found that the King of France had lately died, but the Queen received him with all kindness; and her waiting-maid, the Lady of Senlis, loved him so much that she would gladly have wedded

him, but he would have nothing to do with her. Now, one day these ladies discovered the secret of the magic ring ; for, finding him one day asleep upon a couch after a long journey, they drew the ring from his finger, meaning to jest with him about it when he awoke. Much to their horror, the strong man withered up before their eyes, and became an ancient skeleton. Then the Queen, knowing from this that it was truly Olger the Dane, immediately replaced the ring, and he regained his former youth. But the Lady of Senlis, determined that since Olger did not care for her, he should love no one else, sent thirty strong knights to waylay him as he left the Court, and to wrest the ring of Morgan le Fay from his hand. But Sir Olger spurred Papillon among them, with Courtain drawn in his hand, and so escaped untouched. After this the Queen herself wished to marry Olger, for she said ; " He, and he alone, is worthy to sit upon the throne of Charles the Great." And to this Olger agreed, for he felt to sit in his master's seat was the highest earthly honour he could win. So with great pomp and ceremony they prepared for the wedding. The great church blazed with golden banners as a lordly procession entered and proclaimed the approaching coronation of the new-made King ; and Sir Olger took the Queen by the hand, and led her forward, and knelt with her upon the chancel pavement. But ere the marriage vows were spoken, a brighter light than any on earth shone upon them, and all at once a thick white cloud wrapped round the knight. Some say that Morgan le Fay was seen floating down through the cloud, with arms outstretched, to carry off her knight. However that may be, when the cloud had cleared away Sir Olger was no more to be seen upon this earth. But

men whisper that Olger the Dane lives yet, for the torch still burns in the treasure-house of the Abbey of St Faron. He is only asleep in the faery islands of Avalon, and one day he will awaken, and return again, return to deliver France once more in time of need, when the Franks shall turn, and conquer their foes, with their ancient battle-cry of " Olger ! Olger the Dane ! "

From the Anglo-Norman Romance of Charlemagne, about the twelfth century, but undoubtedly borrowed from a Celtic source, since the whole spirit of the tale is Celtic in origin.

The Story of King Fortager

CONSTAUNCE, King of Britain, was a mighty man of valour, and in his days the people were freed from their enemies, but when he died, his eldest son, Moyne the Monk, who had lived all his days in the Abbey of Winchester, sat upon the throne. Now when Angys the Dane saw King Moyne to be but a studious youth, hating the thought of warfare, he gathered an army together, and sailed for Britain.

Then was there great terror in the land; and King Moyne gave orders to Fortager, his father's steward, that he should put himself at the head of the Britons, and fight against Angys. But Fortager pretended to be very sick, so that he could not go forth to battle. Then King Moyne was obliged to go himself, and so badly did he conduct the fight that the Britons were defeated. And Angys took many British towns and castles, and fortified them against their former owners. Now, there had fought under King Moyne twelve British chieftains who were very ill content with the state of affairs. They came together, and said: "If Fortager had been our leader this would not have happened so." Then they went to Fortager to ask his counsel. But Fortager would only say: "Seek counsel of your King; it will be time enough to ask for mine when Moyne is King no longer."

On hearing these words, the twelve chieftains went straightway to King Moyne, and slew him as he sat at meat within his hall; after which they returned to Fortager, and greeted him as King. But there were many who yet loved the race of good King Constaunce, and some of the barons took his two young sons, Aurilis-Brosias and Uther-Pendragon, the brothers of King Moyne, and sent them away to Brittany, lest they too should be slain.

Meantime Fortager had called together a great army, and had fought with Angys and driven him from the land; and he would have killed the Dane as he prepared to flee, had not Angys begged for mercy and promised to make war no more on Britain.

So Angys sailed away with his host, and Fortager marched in triumph to the capital. And while he was feasting in the palace, the twelve chieftains who had slain King Moyne came to him, and said: "O King, remember it was we who made you King and placed you here on high; give us now a reward." And Fortager answered: "Now that I am King I will indeed give a meet reward for traitors." And, having ordered wild horses to be brought in, he watched them tear the traitors limb from limb upon his castle pavement. Now, by this deed Fortager roused the wrath of all who had helped him to his throne, and many spoke of bringing back Aurilis-Brosias and Uther-Pendragon to the land. And Fortager was hunted through the kingdom, and sorely beaten, so that he scarce escaped with his life.

At length he determined to send for help to King Angys, which he forthwith did, promising him half the kingdom if he would come to his aid. So Angys returned again with many men and ships, and by his aid

Britain was subdued by force of arms. But though the war ceased there was no peace in the land ; and Fortager went about in deadly fear, first of the Britons whom he had betrayed, and next of Angys, lest with his powerful host he should seize the whole kingdom. And lastly, he feared that the men of Brittany would come over and fight for Aurilis-Brosias and Uther-Pendragon, and bring them back to their father's throne.

So he determined to build a strong castle, made of well-hewn stone and timber—an impregnable fortress with lofty towers and battlements, a deep moat and heavy drawbridge—such as had never been seen for strength in the world before ; and he decided to rear it on Salisbury Plain, and so be surrounded by wastes of land, and far from his foes. At daybreak three thousand men began the work—hewers of wood and carpenters and masons and cunning workers in stone. The foundations were laid deep, on vast blocks of stone clamped with iron ; and by nightfall the wall had risen breast-high. But when they came to their work next morning, they found to their dismay that the ground was scattered with the stones they had built up, and that all they had done was destroyed. That day they built it up again, laying the foundations deeper than before, and clamping each stone to the next with iron. But when they came next morning all was overthrown as before.

Then Fortager called together ten wise men, and shut them in a tower, open to the sky, that they might read the stars, and find out why these things should be. And after nine days the wise men came to him, and said :

" Sire, we read in the stars that an elf child has been born in Britain, knowing things past and things to come.

Find the child, and slay him on this plain, and mix the mortar with his blood, and so shall the wall stand fast." So Fortager sent men forth to journey far and wide till they should find the child, and after wandering for many days and weeks, one party of messengers came to a certain town, and found some children quarrelling in the market-place at their games.

"Thou son of a black elf," they heard one say, "we will not play with thee, for we know not who thou art." The messengers gazed hard at the five-year-old child thus addressed; and immediately the boy, who was called Merlin, ran up to them, and said: "Welcome, O messengers, and behold him whom you seek. But think not, for all men may say, that my blood will ever make firm the castle walls of Fortager; for his wise men who try to read the stars are but blind, and they blunder past what lies at their very feet."

Then the men wondered greatly, and said: "How didst thou know of our errand?"

And Merlin answered: "I can see as it were pictures of all that is and all that shall be. I will go with you to Fortager, and show what hinders building up his fortress on the Plain."

So he mounted a pony, and followed after the men on horseback.

And as they journeyed through a town, they saw a man buying strong new shoes and leather wherewith to mend them when they wore out; and Merlin laughed to himself.

"Why do you laugh?" asked the messengers.

"Because he will never wear the shoes," replied the boy. And so it came to pass, for the man fell dead at his door as he carried home the shoes.

And next day Merlin laughed again, and, being asked why, said : " King Fortager is jealous because his Queen's chamberlain is better looking than he, and he threatens to take his life, knowing not that the handsome fellow is but a woman in disguise."

And when they came to the palace, they found that it was just as the boy had said, so the chamberlain's life was spared. Then Fortager marvelled greatly at the wisdom of this child of five years, and begged him to reveal the mystery of his castle wall. And Merlin said : " The fiends have deceived your wise men by showing false signs among the stars ; for my kindred of the air are very wroth because I have been baptised into Christendom, and they seek to destroy my life. But if you send your men to dig a yard beneath the wall's foundation, they will there find a stream of water running over two mighty stones, under which live two dragons. Each night at sundown these dragons wake, and do battle, so that the earth is shaken, and the wall falls down."

Then Fortager set his men to dig beneath the foundations as Merlin had said ; and presently they came to a fast and furious stream, which they turned off by making another channel. And in the river-bed were two huge stones, which it took many men to heave up, and there beneath them lay the dragons. One was as red as fire, and his body a rood in length, with eyes that gleamed like red-hot coals, and a strong and supple tail. The other was milk-white, and very grim of look ; he had two heads, and darted out white fire from his jaws. And at sight of them, as they awoke from slumber, all save Merlin fled in panic. Then the dragons arose, and began to fight. And soon the air was full of the fiery breath from their throats,

so that it was like lightning on the earth, and the whole land shook with their noise and fury. All that long summer night they fought with tooth and nail and claw, and fell and rose, and fell and rose again, till the day dawned. And by that time the red dragon had driven the white into a valley, where for a while the latter stood at bay; but at length, recovering himself, he forced the red dragon back into the plain again, and, fixing his claws in his throat, tore him to pieces, and with his fiery flame scorched him up to a heap of ashes on the plain. Then the white dragon flew away into the air.

From that time Merlin became a great favourite of King Fortager, and counselled him in all things. And now, when the masons began to build, the wall no longer fell down as before, and in course of time a fair white castle arose upon the plain, stronger and mightier than any that the world had ever seen.

Then Fortager sent for Merlin, and asked what the battle of the dragons really meant, and if it betokened things that should yet come to pass. But the boy would answer nothing. Then in his anger King Fortager threatened to slay him; but Merlin only laughed in scorn, saying:

"*You* will never see my death-day. Strike if you will, and bind me fast, but you will only fight the air."

Then Fortager began to entreat him humbly, and swore that no harm should come to him whatever he should say. And at length Merlin told him that the red dragon betokened Fortager and the power he had obtained through killing King Moyne. The white dragon with the two heads represented the true heirs, Aurilis-Brosias and Uther-Pendragon, whose kingdom he held, and as the white dragon, hunted to the valley, there regained his breath,

and drove back the red dragon to the plain, so should these heirs, driven out to Brittany, find help and succour there, and were even now sailing to Britain with a vast army to hunt King Fortager through the land, and to drive him to his castle on the Plain. And there, while he was shut up, with his wife and children, he should be burnt to ashes.

Then King Fortager, when he heard this, was grieved at heart, and prayed Merlin to tell him how to avoid this terrible fate, or at least how he might escape with his life. But Merlin only answered:

"What will be, will be."

Then Fortager, in his wrath, tried to seize the boy; but Merlin vanished from his sight, and while they sought him, he was all the time far away in the cell of Blaise the hermit. And there he remained for many a year, and wrote a book concerning all the things that were going to happen in Britain.

Meantime all that he had foretold took place. For Uther-Pendragon and his brother marched to Winchester with an army, and when the citizens saw the banner of their old British kings, they drove out the Danish garrison, and opened the gates to the sons of Constaunce. And not one of the men of Britain would fight on the side of Fortager or Angys, nor would the men of their armies fight against their friends and brothers in the land. So they won an easy victory, and drove Fortager away to his fortress on Salisbury Plain, where he shut himself up with his wife and children. And the men of Britain threw wildfire on the walls, and burnt him there, and all that belonged to him, and made his castle walls level with the ground.

But Angys fled away to a fortress on a hill, whither

Uther-Pendragon followed, but could not come to him because of the strong bulwarks by which it was surrounded.

Then, hearing men speak often of the wisdom of Merlin, Uther-Pendragon sent men far and wide to seek him. And one day, when these messengers sat at dinner, there came in to them an old beggar, with a snow-white beard and ragged shoes and a staff in his hand, and said: "Ye are wise messengers who seek the child Merlin! Often to-day have ye passed him on the road, and yet ye knew him not. Go back to Uther, and tell him that Merlin waits in the wood hard by; for, search as ye will, ye will never find him."

And with these words the old man disappeared. Then the messengers, wondering greatly, returned, and told all to Uther, who left his brother to maintain the siege, and went to the wood to seek Merlin. And first he met a swineherd, who said he had lately seen the elf child, and then a chapman with his pack, who said the same. Then came a countryman, who said that Merlin would surely keep his tryst, but that Uther must be patient, as he still had some work to do ere he sought the palace.

So the prince waited patiently far into the night; and at length the countryman returned to him, saying: "I am Merlin, and I will now go with you to the camp."

When they got there Aurilis-Brosias came out to meet them, and said: "Brother, there came a countryman in the night, who waked me, saying: 'Angys is come out of his fortress, and has stolen past your sentinels, and is in your camp, seeking to take your life.' So I sprang up, and, seeing Angys at the door, I rushed upon him, and slew him, my sword passing through his coat of mail as if it

had been naught. But when all was over, the countryman had vanished."

Then Uther answered: "Brother, here is the countryman, and he is Merlin." Then were the princes much rejoiced, and thanked Merlin for his timely aid. And in the morning the Danes and Saxons yielded up their citadel, and asked leave to sail away to their own land.

So the country was once more free; and the Britons took Uther-Pendragon, the elder of the brothers, and crowned him King at Winchester.

For seven long years he reigned and prospered; and Merlin was counsellor not only to him, but to his son, the great King Arthur, after him.

Amongst the deeds which were performed by the magician to please the King, it is told:

> "How Merlin, by his skill, and magic's wondrous might,
> From Ireland hither brought the Stonendge in a night."
>
> DRAYTON.

And many of these stones may still be seen standing upon Salisbury Plain.

From the Romance of Merlin. Thirteenth or fourteenth century.

The Story of Richard Lion Heart

THIS story is about that same King Richard I. of whom you read in history. But it is *really* a "story," not an account of things that actually happened to him. You see, English people liked him so much that after he was dead they were not content merely to remember the deeds he had actually done, but made up many new ones, which they told in their songs and stories; and this is about some of them.

Soon after young King Richard first came to the throne, he wanted to find out who were the bravest knights in his dominions. So he prepared three disguises for himself, in which he might appear as a "knight adventurer," and summoned all his followers to a great tournament. On the day appointed, when all was ready, and everyone awaited only the King, a strange knight, dressed in black, riding a black horse, and wearing on his helmet a raven with a bell hung round its neck, galloped into the lists, and shouted his challenge. No one was anxious to take it up; for the stranger's spear was fourteen feet long and twenty-one inches round, and they feared what might be the strength of him who wielded it. At length a knight rode forth to meet him, and was instantly unhorsed; another followed, and was killed by the violence of the onset; a third barely escaped with his life. No other ventured

forward; and the Knight of the Raven, after waiting a while, set spurs to his horse, plunged into the forest, and disappeared.

After a short time another knight rode out of the forest on a bay horse. He wore a suit of red armour, and on his helmet's crest was a red hound. This Knight of the Red Dog rode into the midst of the throng, and, handing his spear to his squire, took his mace, and, riding up to Sir Thomas de Multon, the most renowned knight in England, struck him a mighty blow. Sir Thomas, however, was not at all dismayed at this sudden onset, and merely suggested that his adversary should go and amuse himself elsewhere. The stranger's reply was a second and still more violent blow, which nearly crushed his helmet; whereupon Sir Thomas turned upon him, and thrust with such vigour that the Knight of the Red Dog lost his stirrups, and, recovering them with difficulty, rode off into the forest.

Presently another knight rode forth, wearing white armour, with a dove for his crest, and riding a snow-white horse. Finding no man disposed to take up his challenge, he rode round the ring till he caught sight of Sir Fulk Doyley, a very worthy antagonist, and at once aimed at him a furious blow. Sir Fulk received it quite calmly, with only a warning not to repeat the offence; but when a second fell, he struck the Knight of the Dove with such strength that the latter lost both stirrup and saddle, and was carried away almost senseless to the palace.

When the tournament was over the King summoned Sir Fulk and Sir Thomas, and asked who had acquitted himself best of all the combatants. Both agreed that the honours of the day belonged to the unknown knights in

black, red, and white armour, though each complained of the unsuspected attack and hasty retreat of their mysterious adversaries. Then Richard gave a great laugh, and told them that he himself had been each of the knights in turn, and that he had acted as he did to try the courage of these two, in order that if they stood the test they might be his companions in a pilgrimage he proposed to undertake to the Holy Land.

He then proposed that they should disguise themselves as pilgrims, and, having taken the oath of secrecy and of loyalty to one another, they set out together for Palestine. Having accomplished their pilgrimage successfully, they set their faces towards their native land, and passed on their way through Germany, where they met with an unfortunate adventure. They had been for many hours without food, when they came to an inn, the keeper of which was too busy to attend to them. He bade them enter, however, and, having killed a good fat goose, told them to cook it for themselves. Wishing nothing better, the supposed pilgrims set to work with joy. King Richard blew up the fire, Sir Thomas set the goose on the spit, Sir Fulk fetched in fresh firewood. The goose was done to a turn, and they were just about to enjoy, it when a minstrel maid entered, and said: "Gentlemen, will ye have any minstrelsy?" Hungry and tired, they bade her go away, and when she begged for food they would not hear.

So the girl turned at the door, saying: "Ye unkind men, one day you will remember that you gave the minstrel neither food nor drink." And with a threatening look she departed. They were not very happy at these words; for they saw by her look and speech that she was English, and they feared to be recognised in this hostile

land. What they dreaded soon came to pass. The minstrel had gone at once to the King of that country, and had betrayed the real rank of the pilgrims ; and the King, in wrath that they should have entered his domains without leave, and, as he thought, with treasonable intent, threw them into a deep dungeon.

Now, this King had a son named Ardour who was very proud of his strength. When this young man heard that the famous King Richard of England was in prison, he ordered him to be brought forth, and he asked him if he would stand a buffet from his hand on condition that he was allowed to return it. Richard promptly agreed, and, weak from hunger as he was, reeled under the prince's blow. But he was so ashamed of his weakness that he quickly recovered, and, pointing out the fact that he had had no food for two days, asked leave to put off the return blow till the next day. Ardour consented, and sent him in a plentiful meal. Next day they met again ; but the young prince's endurance was not equal to his courage, for Richard's blow killed him on the spot.

When the King his father heard this, he was beside himself with anger and grief, and desired above all things to put Richard to death. But his councillors reminded him that it was against the law of Europe to kill a King except in fair fight, and there seemed no way out of the matter. At length one of them suggested that a very large and ferocious lion belonging to the royal menagerie should be kept some days without food, and then let loose in the royal prisoner's cell. This arrangement would satisfy the King's desire for revenge, while shielding him from responsibility for the crime.

Now, the Princess Margery, daughter of the King, heard

of this plan, and, moved with pity for the unfortunate Englishman, she visited him in the prison, and warned him of what was to happen. Richard took the matter very calmly, however, and only asked her to provide him with forty handkerchiefs of white silk. These he bound round his arms to protect them from the beast's claws, and calmly awaited the arrival of the lion. It was brought in by two keepers, and, being loosed, at once made a dash for its prey; but Richard gave it such a blow on the chest that it nearly fell to the ground. Lashing its tail with fury, the lion gave a terrific roar, and sprang upon him. Then the King seized him by his open jaws, and, like Samson of old, tore him asunder, so that he fell dead to the ground. When the King of that land was told this, he was filled with astonishment, and said: "This fellow has the heart of a lion in place of that of a man!" And from that time Richard was surnamed Lion Heart. It was not long before the King, glad to be rid of such a terrible prisoner, accepted a large ransom, and sent him back to England.

About the end of the thirteenth century.

The Story of Havelok the Dane

I. THE EARLY ADVENTURES OF HAVELOK AND GOLDBOROUGH

THERE once lived a king in England whose name was Athelwold. So good a king was he that in his days a man might travel all over the land with a bag of gold without being robbed or ill treated. He was good to the widows and a counsellor to the fatherless; but to all wicked people he was stern and severe, and punished them hardly for their evil deeds.

> "He was the truest man at need
> That ever rode on any steed."

Now, this good King had one little daughter, and no other child to succeed him; and when sickness came upon him, and the time to die drew near, he became very anxious about this little girl, who was too young to walk or speak, and whom he must soon leave without a protector. So he summoned a great meeting of all his barons, and they all wept, and were very sad, to see him so near his end. He bade them dry their tears, however, saying that weeping would do no good; rather should they be thinking how best they might protect his little daughter, who should be their Lady after his death, until she grew up.

Then after long thought he chose out Earl Godrich of

Cornwall, who, he said, was a true and wise man, and one of whom men stood in awe, and to him he gave the charge of the little Princess Goldborough. But first the Earl was made to swear most solemnly that he would look after her well, and see that no harm came to her, till she was twelve years old ; that he would teach her how to act courteously towards everyone ; and, when she was old enough, that he would marry her to the best and fairest and strongest man of all the land.

When the Earl had so sworn, the King had the little maiden brought in, and delivered her to the Earl, together with all the land over which he held rule in England, praying that he would take good care of both child and dominions.

Then the King died, and was buried amidst much grief and sorrow. After he was dead, Earl Godrich soon began to rule the land with an iron hand. He gave castles only to such knights as he knew would support him, and forced the English to keep good faith with him, so that all the land stood in awe of him. But of Goldborough, the rightful heir, he took little heed ; and so the years went on until she was twenty years of age.

Then one day it came to pass that Earl Godrich heard the fame of this Princess: how beautiful she was, how wise and thoughtful, and how many of the people wept in secret for her, knowing that she ought to be Queen.

Then Godrich worked himself in a rage, and said : "Shall this girl indeed be queen and lady over me ? Shall she have all England and me and mine under her control ? A curse on whomsoever would have it so ! Shall I allow a silly girl, no better than a servant maid, to rule over all England just because she wants it ! Not I,

indeed! She is become too proud, owing to her good food and rich dress. I have brought her up too softly, too kindly. It shall not be as she thinks. 'Hope often tricks a foolish man,' says the proverb. I have a son, a handsome boy; he shall be lord and king over this land."

So, forgetful of his oath, he sent his young ward from her home at Winchester away to Dover, where he shut her up in a strongly guarded castle, and gave her poor and shabby clothes to wear and wretched food to eat. And there we must leave Goldborough for the present, weeping bitterly over her sad lot.

Now, in those days there lived in Denmark a certain king named Birkabeyn. A brave man was he, and the best knight who ever rode a steed or handled a spear. Three children had he—a son and two fair daughters—whom he loved as dearly as his own life; but while they were still very young, he was smitten with a sore disease, and knew that he must soon die. He called to him, therefore, his own friend, Godard, and gave the three children into his charge until the time should come when his son should be old enough to wear a helmet, hold a spear, and be acknowledged King of Denmark.

Then Godard swore a mighty oath to give his best care to these young children; and very soon afterwards the good King died. No sooner was he laid in the grave than Godard seized the babes, Havelok the heir to the throne, and his sisters Swanborough and Elfled the Fair—and shut them up in a gloomy castle, where no one could visit them, for it was all barred and bolted.

There they wept often very sorely both for hunger and for cold, for their guardian gave them but few clothes and very scanty food. Then this wicked man took all their

land for himself, and forced the people to swear fealty to him; and, furthermore, he determined to do a yet more cruel deed, lest the children should trouble him in the future.

When he had decided upon his plan, he betook himself to the tower in which the little ones were imprisoned, where he found them weeping for cold and hunger.

He sat down, and the boy, a fearless little fellow, came up to him, and sat upon his knee.

"Why do you cry and sob so?" asked Godard.

And Havelok answered: "We cry because we are so hungry. We always want more food than we can get, and to-day we have nothing to eat and no servant to give us anything to drink. Woe to us that we were born! Is there nowadays no corn in the land that might be made into bread for us? See, we are nearly dead with hunger."

To all this Godard listened without caring in the least, and, turning to the two little girls, both worn and thin from starvation, he pretended to have a game with them, but when he had persuaded them to come near him he seized them, and killed them, and threw them dead upon the floor.

The poor little brother stood by, and when he saw this dreadful deed he shook with terror, and, kneeling before the wicked Godard, cried: "Have mercy on me, and I will give you all Denmark if you will spare my life. I will swear never to do aught to harm you, and if you will be merciful I will flee from Denmark this day, and never more return—and I will swear that Birkabeyn was not my father."

When he heard that, the wicked Godard held back

the knife with which he had been about to slay him, for though he wished him dead, he did not want to kill him with his own hand. He stood hesitating, therefore, saying to himself: "If I let him go he may do me some wrong; if I have mercy on him he may wait a while, and then slay me; but if he were dead, and my children should grow up, they would be rulers of all Denmark after me. He had better die, therefore; so I will forthwith throw him into the sea, and that he may not float, I will bind a heavy weight about his neck."

So he sent for a fisherman whom he knew he could trust, and said: "Grim, you know that you are my servant and slave, but if you now do all that I bid you, to-morrow you shall be free, and also a rich man into the bargain. Take now this child, and when the moon rises, throw him into the sea. I will take the responsibility of the deed."

Then Grim the fisherman took the boy and tied him hand and foot with strong rope, so that he could not move a limb, and when he had wrapped him in an old cloth, so that he could neither speak nor see where he was being taken, he threw Havelok into a great black bag, which he put over his shoulders, and went off to his house. There he met his wife, Levy, and said to her: "Do you know that this boy, whom I am about to drown in the sea, will be the cause of our freedom; and not only shall we be free, but money too has been promised by my lord."

When Dame Levy heard that she started up, and caught the sack, and threw the boy out so roughly that he cracked his head against a great stone, against which he lay half stunned. Well indeed might he now say: "Well-a-day, that ever I was born a king's son!"

Until the middle of the night the child lay there, at

which time Grim bade his wife bring a light, that he might put on his clothes, and go and drown the boy. "Make haste," said he; "blow up the fire and light a candle. Would you hinder me from doing what I have promised to my lord?"

As his wife rose up to blow the fire and to get his clothes, she saw in the dark room a bright light shining on the face of the boy, and touching his mouth like a sunbeam—and the light was as strong as if three candles were burning in the room. "What is this light in our cottage?" cried the astonished dame. "Rise up, Grim, and see what it all means!"

Approaching Havelok in fear and trembling, they ungagged him and undid the ropes; then, turning down his shirt, they found a mark that showed he was of royal blood, clear and plain upon him.

"Why," cried Grim, "this must surely be the heir of Denmark of whom we have heard! And, indeed, he shall be King, and shall hold both Denmark and England in his hand; and to Godard shall he bring great woe!"

Then, falling on his knees before the child, he said: "Lord, have mercy on me and on Levy, my wife. Lord, we are both your servants, and Godard shall never know what has become of you. Then one day, when you are old enough to ride a horse and wear a helmet, shall we be rewarded, for we will never take our freedom from any man save from you."

Very joyful was Havelok when he heard this; but first he sat up, and asked for bread, saying: "Now am I nearly dead from hunger and from these bonds which you put upon me, and I have been well-nigh strangled with the gag which you thrust in my mouth."

Then cried Levy: "Indeed you shall be fed with bread and cheese, butter and milk, pasties and pancakes—all that we have shall be yours in your sore need, my lord. True, true is the saying that one often hears: 'Him whom God wills to help shall nothing hurt.'"

Then Havelok made a joyous meal. A whole loaf did he eat and more, for it was three days since he had had any food. When he was well satisfied, Grim made him up a comfortable bed, undressed him, and laid him therein, saying: "Sleep, little son, and be happy in thy dreams. Be feared of naught, for now art thou brought from sorrow unto joy."

II. HOW HAVELOK BECAME THE SERVANT OF THE EARL'S COOK

When the morning had come, Grim took his way to the house of the traitor Godard, and said to him: "Lord, I have done all that you bade me do to the boy. He is drowned in the sea, with a heavy weight about his neck. Now, therefore, give me gold and the charter of my freedom, as you promised."

Then Godard stood, and looked at him with evil eyes, and said: "Is it that you wish to be an earl indeed? Get home quickly, you foolish fellow, and be a servant to your life's end, for all I care. You shall have no other reward but to be saved from the gallows, and there will I soon see you for your wicked deed, if you stay here any longer."

Then Grim went hastily away, saying to himself: "What shall I do? If he knows that the child yet

lives, he will hang us both upon the gallows-tree. Better would it be for us, with our children, to flee from this land altogether."

Forthwith Grim began to sell his corn, his sheep with their wool, his fisher's net and horn, his horse and pigs and goat, and his geese and hens. All these he turned into money. Then he prepared his little ship, tarred and pitched it, so that it was quite sound, and made for it a strong mast, and good cables, oars, and sails, so that not so much as a nail was wanting in it. Then he placed in it the little Havelok, with his wife, his three sons, and two daughters, and soon was sailing on the high seas. When he was scarcely a mile from the shore a great wind from the north began to blow, and drove them to the English coast—to that very England which was to belong to Havelok in future days. But before that time came, he had to endure much shame and sorrow and pain, as you shall presently hear.

It was in the Humber that Grim landed—at Lindsey, right up on the northern side. The ship ran aground, and Grim drew it up well on the land; and there he made a little house for him and his and for his crew, and built it of mud, and harboured therein. And because Grim was the first to own that place, it received from him the name of Grimsby, which all men call it to this day.

Grim was an excellent fisherman, and many good fish he caught both with net and with hook—such as sturgeon and whales, turbot and salmon, seals, and also eels; with cod and porpoises, herring and mackerel, plaice and thornbacks. To carry these he made strong baskets for himself and his three sons, and sold them so successfully in the neighbouring village that he never came home empty-

handed ; but when he had a catch of the larger lampreys, he would go all the way to the town of Lincoln, where he found a ready sale for them. And from thence he would return with his bag full of fine bread, called " wastels," and horn-shaped cakes called " simnels," with plenty of fresh meat, corn and meal, and hemp to make good lines, and rope to make strong nets.

So Grim worked hard for his young family for some twelve years and more, till Havelok one day became ashamed that the fisherman should toil, while he lay at home. And he thought to himself : " I am now no longer a child ; I am well grown, and often eat more than Grim can get ; indeed, I often eat more than Grim and his five children put together. This must not be. I will go out with them, and sell fish, and work for my living. It is no shame for a man to toil, but it is shame for one to lie at home at ease. May God reward him who has fed me up to this day if I never get the chance myself ! Now will I gladly carry the baskets when to-morrow dawns."

So Havelok worked with a will, and sold his fish to such good account that he brought home a store of silver ; and of this he kept not a farthing for himself, but gave it all to Grim.

Now, about that time it so befell that a great dearth arose in that land, and there was no corn to make bread. Great anxiety began to fill the mind of Grim, for he knew not how to feed his family. Havelok was his chief trouble, for he was big and strong, and could easily eat more than ever he could get for him. And no longer was fish plentiful in those seas as before. He did not think of his own children ; all his thought was how Havelok should fare. So he went to him and said :

"Havelok, dear son, I fear we must soon die of hunger in this great dearth. It will be better for you that you go hence, and dwell no longer here, or else it may be too late. For me it matters not, but for you it is good that you go to Lincoln, that fine town that you have often visited with me. Many a good man dwells therein, and there you may get food. But, alas! your clothes are so torn that I must make you fresh ones out of my sail, else will you take cold."

So he took the shears off the nail where they hung, and made Havelok a coat out of the sail; and the lad soon had it on. He had neither stockings nor shoes, nor any other garments, and so set off barefoot to Lincoln.

When he arrived at the city he knew not where to look for friends or food, and for two days he wandered about in a fasting condition. On the third day he heard a call of "Porters, porters! Hither come all of you!"

Then all the poor who were afoot ran hurriedly forward; and amongst them Havelok fought his way, pushing down nine or ten into the mud, and so stood foremost before the Earl's Cook, who was buying meat at the bridge. He was bidden to carry the food to the castle, and there was given a farthing cake for his trouble. The next day he kept a sharp lookout for the Cook, till he saw him on the bridge, with a quantity of fish at his side which had been sent from Cornwall, and heard him call: "Porters, porters, come quickly!"

Then Havelok rejoiced, and, having knocked down all who tried to hinder him (even sixteen strong lads), he rushed up to the Cook with his fish basket, and began to pick up the fish. Nearly a cart-load he carried up to the castle; and when they had taken his burden from him,

the Cook, who stood by, looked on him, and seeing what a stalwart fellow he was, said: "Will you stay with me? I will gladly feed you and give you what money you are worth."

"Indeed, sir," answered Havelok, "I will gladly serve you without any payment, save enough to eat. I will fetch your water, and blow up your fire, and break sticks for it; and I know also how to clean fish and wash dishes, and will do all that you require."

"Sit you down, then," said the Cook very kindly, "and first eat a good meal, for you look in sore need."

Still as a stone sat Havelok till he had eaten his fill, and then busily set to work. He brought in water and turves and wood, and worked as hard all day as if he were a beast of burden. All men loved him, for he was so merry and blithe of speech, and never showed any sorrow of heart that he might feel because of his position. But especially was he the children's favourite: he would play with the smallest child so gently, and do all that the little ones, playing by the wayside, required of him. Soon he became noted in that place for his size and strength and handsome looks, and men wondered who he was that he should look so well and noble, and yet wear such poor, mean clothes.

When the Cook heard their talk, he bought Havelok a suit of fine new clothes, with shoes and stockings, and when he was dressed in them, truly he looked the handsomest man who ever lived upon this earth.

Now, at that time the yearly games were held at Lincoln, to which came all the Earl's men; and Havelok was head and shoulders taller than any of them, and was both gentle and strong.

In those days Earl Godrich ruled in England, and he

had come into the town of Lincoln with many an earl and many a baron to see the great games, and to be present at a Council to be held at that place. With them came many champions and lads who were eager to try their strength, and so it came about that nine or ten young men began a game of skill. The people crowded round them, rich and poor, strong and weak, champions, ploughmen, and boys, to see the game, which was in this wise: In front of them stood a tree, and towards this the lads were throwing a great stone that was as heavy as a young ox. It took a strong man to lift it as high as his knee, and no one could raise it as high as his breast. This stone the champions now began to throw, or "put" as they called it, while the barons crowded round to see, and the man who could put it even an inch in front of another was hailed as champion of them all. In the midst of the noise and quarrelling over which had thrown farthest stood Havelok, looking on, for he had never before seen such a game.

His master saw him there, and bade him try his luck. Forthwith he stepped forward, and, catching up that heavy stone, he put it beyond the others a distance of twelve feet or more.

When the champions saw the deed, they nudged each other, laughing, and wished no more to try the "putting," saying: "We stay here too long!" Very soon it was known by everyone that Havelok had thrown the stone farther than anyone; and men began to talk admiringly of his size and strength and good looks, both in castle and in hall, throughout the land, till at length the news came to the ears of Godrich.

III. HOW HAVELOK AND GOLDBOROUGH CAME TO DENMARK

No sooner had Godrich heard of the strength and fame of Havelok than an idea struck him, which he thought, when carried out, would ensure his keeping possession of the kingdom, and his son after him. So he said to himself: "Through this lad will I keep all England in my hands. King Athelwold made me swear very solemnly that I should give his daughter in marriage to the tallest, strongest, best, and handsomest man I could find. Now, where shall I find one so tall or skilful as this Havelok? He, then, shall be the man to marry Goldborough."

This he devised in treachery, for he thought that Havelok was some low-born fellow, who would never be considered fit to hold an acre of land, even if he married her who was heir to all England, and thus both would be put aside, and his son would succeed him without a word against him.

So he sent for Goldborough to come to Lincoln, and pretended to give her a joyous greeting, with bells ringing and merry-making. Then he told her that he was about to marry her to the fairest man in the land. But she answered at once, and said that she would marry no man, however fair he was, who was not a king or heir to a kingdom.

Then Godrich the Earl was very wroth, and said: "Will you indeed come the queen and lady over me? You shall marry a vagabond—that is the only king you shall have. You shall marry my cook's servant, and tomorrow shall the wedding take place."

Then Goldborough wept sore, and wished that she were dead.

When morning came, and the day-bells were ringing from the church tower, the wicked Earl sent for Havelok, and said to him : " Here, fellow, will you have a wife ? "

" Not I," answered Havelok. " What should I do with a wife ? I could neither feed nor clothe her, nor put shoes on her feet. And where should I take a wife if I had one ? I have no relations, and neither cottage nor house, sticks nor clothes, except an old white cloak. These very garments that I have on are the cook's, and I am his servant."

Then Earl Godrich sprang up, and fell upon him with a heavy stick, and began to beat him very sorely, saying : " If you do not take the woman I shall give you, and marry her, I will have you hanged, or you shall have your eyes thrust out."

Havelok was so frightened at his threats that he agreed to do what he wished. And forthwith the Earl called in the fairest maiden he had ever seen in his life, and said to her : " If you do not marry this man I will drive you out of the land, or send you to the gallows-tree, where you shall be burnt."

Then Goldborough, through fear, promised to do what he required. The Archbishop of York, who was present at the Council, was called in to marry them, and, after giving them a small sum of money, the Earl went away.

Havelok now knew not what to do for the best. But after much thought he saw that the Earl hated them, and that it would be better to get away from Lincoln, so he determined to go to Grimsby, and visit his foster-father.

Thither they hurried as fast as they could go, but when

they reached the place, they found that Grim and his wife were dead. Their five children were there, however, and rejoiced to see Havelok, saying: "Welcome, dear lord, and welcome to your fair wife! You may do with us what you will, if only you will stay with us. For we are well off now, and have horses and nets and boats, and gold and silver money, which Grim, our father, bade us take care of for you. We have sheep, too, and pigs. Only remain here, and all shall be yours. You shall be our lord and master, and we will be your servants, and our sisters shall do your wife's bidding. They will wash and dry her clothes, and bring water for her hands, for we would have her live as a lady should."

Then they hastened to make a fire, and cooked a supper for which neither geese nor chickens were spared, and so a joyous feast was made.

Now, that night, when all the rest were asleep, Goldborough lay weeping because she had not married a king's son. Then on a sudden she was a bright light shine in the room, and could not think where it came from, but soon she saw that it came from her husband's mouth as he lay asleep. "What can this mean?" thought Goldborough. "Surely it betokens that he will be a nobleman one day, if he is not one already." Then, coming nearer, she saw a beautiful cross marked in gold on his shoulder, and heard a voice, which seemed that of an angel, saying: "Goldborough, sorrow no longer, for Havelok, thy husband, is a king's son and a king's heir—and that is what is meant by the cross upon his shoulder. It means also that he shall be King both of England and of Denmark; and thou shalt see it, and be Queen and Lady in those lands."

Then was Goldborough full of joy; and she bent over Havelok, and kissed him, so that he awoke, saying: "I have had such a strange dream. I thought I was in Denmark, on the top of the highest hill that ever I saw, so that it seemed that I looked down on all the earth. And as I sat upon that peak, I began to own all Denmark, and when I stretched out my arms they were so long that they embraced the whole land. The keys of all the castles fell at my feet, and all those who lived therein were clasped in my arms. Then I dreamed another dream. I thought I flew over the salt sea to England, taking with me all those who lived in Denmark, except the bondmen and their wives, and took the whole of England in my hand. And then, Goldborough, I gave it to you. What can this mean?"

Then said she: "What should it mean but that you will one day wear the crown of England. Denmark shall kneel at your feet, and all the castles in that land shall be yours, together with those who live therein, and you shall be a great king within a year. Now, take us both to Denmark without delay, for 'helpfulness and success are companions.' And for me, I shall never be happy till I have seen Denmark, for I am sure that one day you will own that country. Ask all three of Grim's sons to go with you. I am sure they will not refuse, for they love you dearly. See that they make ready a ship without delay, for 'tarrying has often been the cause of harm.'"

Then Havelok remembered his early days, and he prayed for vengeance upon Godard, who had done his best to kill him, and still thought him dead. He went forthwith to Grim's three sons, and told them his story: how his

father had been King of Denmark, of the fate that had overtaken his two little sisters, and how Grim had saved his life. He told them, too, that he should never be happy till he had seen Denmark again, and promised one day to make them rich men if they would go with him. To this they gladly agreed, and Havelok, with his young wife Goldborough, set sail with them to Denmark. When they reached that land they travelled through it until they came to the castle of a great Danish earl, named Ubbe, who had been a good friend to King Birkabeyn. Havelok visited him, and begged that he might be allowed to settle in that part of the country, and get a living by trading. When he had finished speaking, he took out a valuable gold ring, and gave it to the Earl.

Then Ubbe's heart went out to Havelok, and looking on him with favour, he said to himself: "Why is this fine young man not a knight? Surely he is better fit to wear a helmet and hold a spear and shield than to buy and sell merchandise."

But of this he showed nothing; only he granted Havelok's request, and bade him come to a feast that he had made. Nor would he take denial, but rode away, repeating: "See that ye both come."

And so it came to pass that the beauty of Goldborough and the strength and fair speech of Havelok so won Ubbe's heart that he sent a company of ten knights, and about sixty other men, to bring them in safety to the chief man in all that district, whose name was Bernard Brun. This good man gladly received Havelok, and made him a good supper at his house.

Now, as they sat at supper, a gang of thieves, some sixty in number, armed with swords and knives, attacked

the house, crying: "Unfasten, Bernard, and let us in, or we will kill you and yours!"

Then Bernard, who was a big, strong man, snatched up an axe, and went to the door, and bade them begone, saying that if he opened the door they should pay for it with their lives. But they answered that they were not afraid of him, and that if he would not open the door they would get in without his help; and forthwith they seized a great boulder, and dashed it against the door, so that it burst open. When Havelok saw this, he threw the door wide open, crying: "Now that you have come, here shall you stay! Come quickly in, and a curse on him who runs away!" Then three of the robbers leaped at Havelok with their swords, but he snatched up the bar of the door, and slew them all. Then he turned on the rest, smashing the head of one, the eye of another, and the back of a third, until he had slain seven of them. The rest of the thieves then made a rush at Havelok with their swords, and would have overpowered him had not Hugh Raven, one of the sons of Grim, who had all followed Havelok afar off, heard the noise, and, thinking something was wrong with his dear lord, summoned the other two, and rushed to the rescue. Robert, the eldest, held a great staff; William, the next, a tree thicker than the staff; while Hugh carried an oar. Bernard still held his axe fast enough; and valiantly they fought by Havelok's side till all the sixty thieves lay dead upon the ground.

IV. HOW HAVELOK BECAME KING OF ENGLAND

Next morning news was brought to Earl Ubbe that Havelok had killed sixty of his bravest servants with a club. The good Earl was much disquieted to hear this, and that he might get at the truth of so extraordinary a story, he jumped on his horse, and rode to the house of Bernard, and asked what the report meant. Then Bernard came out to him with torn clothes and bruised face, and said: "Indeed, if it had not been for this good man Havelok, I should not now be alive, for my house was attacked by sixty thieves, who broke in, and would have overpowered me, if Havelok had not seized the bolt of the door and fought them as if he had been a thousand men instead of one. But, alas! poor fellow, he was so roughly handled that he is wounded severely in the side and arm and thigh, and has received as well more than twenty other wounds; yet, in spite of all, he has left not one of these sixty robbers alive."

Then Ubbe said: "Can this be true?" And all who stood by, young and old, said that Bernard had told but the bare truth. "Bring him to me, then," cried Ubbe, "if he can walk at all, and I will make him a knight for his brave deed."

Then they brought Havelok to Ubbe, and set him upon a horse, for he was too sorely wounded to stand upright. After a doctor had attended to his hurts, Ubbe bade him, with Goldborough and his three servants, come back to his castle, and stay under his protection, lest the robbers' friends should lie in wait to slay him in revenge. So he brought him back, and gave him a fine room next

his own, in a high tower, where they could visit each other whenever they liked.

The first night that Havelok slept in this room Earl Ubbe saw a bright light streaming through the partition between the two rooms, and rose up to see what it might mean. Looking through a hole he saw that Havelok was lying fast asleep, and that a brilliant ray of light shone from out his mouth. So astonished was he that he summoned very quietly a number of his knights and followers, and bade them look, and they all observed the same strange appearance. When they looked closer still, they saw on his right shoulder, which was uncovered, a bright cross, shining as though made of gold, and then all knew that he was the son of a king.

"Truly," cried Ubbe, "he must be the son of Birkabeyn, for never saw I anyone so like another as he is to our late beloved King."

Then he fell at Havelok's feet, and kissed them, so that he awoke, and started up in fear, expecting some treachery. But Ubbe soothed him, and told him that he knew now that he was the son of Birkabeyn, and, young as he was, he should soon be King of all Denmark, and all men should do homage to him. Then was Havelok full of joy, and thanked God very heartily.

When the morning was come, Ubbe called together a great assembly of earls and barons, knights, clerks, farmers, and townsmen, and told them the story of Havelok, and how Godard had basely betrayed the trust the King had given him. Then he bade them all do homage to the young prince, and he himself was the first to kneel and declare himself his "man." One after another followed, and all swore to be faithful to Havelok. After

they had so done Ubbe sent word throughout all Denmark, until there was not one who had not heard the glad tidings, and come to Ubbe and sworn homage. Then Ubbe took a bright sword, and with it he dubbed Havelok knight, and all the people received him as their King.

A great feast was held at this ceremony, and all kinds of amusements began. Some of the men fell to tilting at each other with sharp spears ; others skirmished with sword and buckler. There were wrestling matches and "putting the stone"; tunes on the harp and pipes and playing with dice ; romances were told or read, gleemen sang and played ; there was bull-baiting and a boar hunt ; and the whole story of Grim was acted for the people's benefit. Not forgetting his old friends, the new-made King created Robert and William and Hugh Raven, his old friends, barons, and gave them land and money as much as they could wish. The feast was held for forty days, and when it was over, King Havelok kept back a thousand brave knights to follow him, and five thousand servants to fight for him, and he made fifty of the former and all the latter swear that they would never rest till they had found Godard and brought him before the King in chains.

It so happened that Robert, who had been made the general of the army, was the first to meet Godard, as he was riding along a path to the hunt. Stopping in front of his horse, Robert cried: "Stay, fellow! What are you doing here ? You must come to the King, who bids you remember what you did to him and his: how you slew his little sisters and ordered that he should be drowned in the sea. All this he knows, and you shall meet with due reward at his hands."

When Godard heard that he dealt a heavy blow at the speaker; but Robert snatched out a long knife, and struck him in the arm, so that he could fight no longer. Then would his followers have slain Robert had not William and Hugh, with five lads, come up and soon killed ten of Godard's men; and when they saw this all the rest of his troop ran away. Then Godard cried after them, and besought them, saying: "Will ye, whom I have fed and clothed, run from me in my danger and let Havelok work his will on me?" Hearing these words they returned, and killed a knight and wounded several of the King's men; but when the rest of the King's troop had come up they fell on the followers of Godard, and left not one alive save the Earl himself. Him they took and tightly bound, and set upon a horse, with his face turned to the tail, and so was he brought to Havelok. When he arrived, the King quickly called Ubbe and all his earls and barons, burghers and knights, and bade them act as judges. Then sat they down on benches round the wall and held trial of Godard, and presently said to the King, who sat quite silently by them: "We give it our judgment that he should be flayed alive, and then hung on the gallows in chains. On the gallows should these words be placed: 'This is that wicked man who was well aware that he had robbed the King of his land, and his sisters of their lives.'"

So this was the end of the false traitor Godard, and with his money and land the King founded a monastery, in memory of the good fisherman Grim, in that town which still bears his name.

Now, when Godrich, Earl of Cornwall, heard that Havelok was King of Denmark, that he was coming with a

strong force to conquer England, and that the fair Princess Goldborough had already landed with him at Grimsby, he was full of grief and rage, and swore to kill them both. Without delay he raised a great army, and summoned it to meet at Lincoln on the 17th of March. When the soldiers were gathered together, he excited their minds against Havelok by telling them that the Danish army was spoiling the land, burning churches, robbing monasteries, binding priests, and strangling monks and nuns, and warned them that there would be neither peace nor safety in the land till the Danes were driven out. Then all the earls cried out that they would follow Godrich to the battlefield, and so the English army marched on Grimsby.

Then out rode Havelok with his three foster-brothers, and slew the foremost men of the attack ; but Ubbe, keen for the fray, pricked on his horse until he found himself face to face with Earl Godrich himself. Bravely fought the Earl for his life, and sorely did he wound Ubbe, and would have slain him outright had not Hugh Raven come to the rescue and carried Ubbe away. Then Godrich with his men turned fiercely on the Danes, who began to give way before him, seeing that so many of their comrades had been killed.

At length Havelok made his way through the throng, and riding up to Godrich, cried out to him :

" Godrich, who are you who thus slay my good knights and behave in this manner to me ? You know full well, if you come to think on it, how Athelwold bade you swear, on your knees, by all that is holy, that you would give to his daughter, when she was woman grown, the realm of England. Well you know it, Godrich the Earl ! Now

The Coming of the Danes

From a painting by Herbert A. Bone, R.A.

call I upon you to give up this land without further fighting, for that alone is right to do. Then will I forgive you the wrong you have done, seeing you are such a valiant knight."

Then Godrich answered: "That will I never do; but I will kill you and hang her high upon a tree; and, unless you flee from hence, I will thrust out that eye with which you look on me at this moment."

Seizing his sword, with these words, he gave Havelok such a blow that he cut his shield in two, but when Havelok knew it, he smote the Earl on the head, so that he fell to the ground. For a moment only he lay there; then, springing up anew, he struck Havelok on the shoulder, so that he broke through the hinged mail of his corselet, and wounded him sorely. But Havelok swung up his good sword, and cut off the arm which had struck him with one blow, and, seizing him by the neck, bound him hand and foot as a traitor. In this condition he sent him to Queen Goldborough, bidding her keep him close prisoner till he should be tried, as a knight, by the knights of the land.

When all the people of England knew that the fair Goldborough was their rightful Queen, and that she was wedded to Havelok, that bold warrior, they all hastened to do homage to her, and to him as their King. Six of the great earls of the land first approached her, and, falling weeping on their knees, said: "Lady, have mercy upon us, because we have not been faithful to you; for we know now that all England belongs to you as King Athelwold's heir, and that this rascal Godrich, who wrongfully held it all these years, deserves to be hung, and that soon."

Then Havelok bade them pass judgment on the Earl; and when they had condemned him, Godrich was led into

Lincoln, tied upon an ass, with his face turned towards the tail, and, being tied to a stake in the midst of the market-green, was burnt for his many sins.

When this was accomplished, Havelok and Goldborough received the homage of all the English amidst scenes of great rejoicing. But they did not forget their old friends among so many new ones. The Earl of Chester, a brave young knight, was singled out by Havelok to be the husband of Gunild, the daughter of Grim, and with her he gave him a rich gift and many favours. Next he sent for Bertram, the Earl's cook, and said to him : " My friend, for your good advice and kindness to me in former days, when I was in much need, you shall have rich reward, for when I was in rags and misery you fed and clothed me freely. Now you shall be Earl of Cornwall, and have all the land of Godrich for your own, as well as a fair wife, Levy, the second daughter of my benefactor Grim."

After this Havelok was escorted by the English and Danish armies to London, where he was crowned King, and Goldborough Queen. Then the Danes returned to Denmark, where Ubbe ruled, while Havelok resided in England.

For sixty years did Havelok rule this country with Goldborough, his beloved Queen. Brave sons and daughters they brought up, who all became kings and queens in after days ; and so the name of Havelok was beloved throughout all the land.

From " The Lay of Havelok." About 1300 A.D.

Another Riddle of Cynewulf

(750-790 A.D.)

(*Translated by* Rev. Stopford A. Brooke, M.A.)

"WHO so wary and so wise of the warriors lives,
That he dare declare who doth drive me on my way,
When I start up in my strength! Oft in stormy wrath,
Hugely then I thunder, tear along in gusts,
Fare above the floor of earth, burn the folk-halls down,
Ravage all the rooms! Then the reek ariseth
Gray above the gables. Great on earth the din
And the slaughter-qualm of men. Then I shake the woodland,
Forests rich in fruits; then I fell the trees;——
On my back I carry that which covered once
All the tribes of Earth's indwellers, spirits and all flesh,
In the sand together! Say who shuts me in,
Or what is my name— I who bear this burden."

[*The answer is a Storm on Land. That which it bears on its back is, of course, the Water of the Flood.*]

The Tale of Sir Cleges

THERE lived in the days of King Arthur's father a good knight named Sir Cleges. He was so kind and generous to everyone that after a time he had nothing left for himself and for Claris, his wife, and his little children. But still neither he nor his wife would despair, but hoped for better days. When Christmas-time came, however, Sir Cleges grew very despondent, for at that season he was wont to feed "both free and bond." On Christmas Eve he wandered about his garden feeling very sad, and inclined to grumble at his ill fate; but his good wife came to him, and, putting her arms round him, kissed him warmly, and bade him come in to his solitary meal, and be glad in honour of the day. So he went in, and played with his children, and made merry with them, and on the morrow went to church. And as they returned, he went alone into his garden, and, kneeling down under a cherry-tree, all frost-bitten with the wintry cold, he thanked God for the many blessings he still had left. But when he pulled himself up by a bough of the tree, strangely enough the bough was green, and had ripe cherries growing upon it. This was very surprising, and Sir Cleges hastened to show them to his wife. She at once proposed that he should put the Christmas cherries in a basket, and take them as a present

to King Uther, his old master, in his castle at Cardiff. So the knight put on his oldest clothes for the journey, and took a staff in his hand, so that he looked like a poor beggar, and, with his little son by his side to carry the basket of cherries, set off for Cardiff.

When they reached the gate of the castle, however, they found there a very surly porter, who threatened to break the poor man's head if he attempted to go in. So Sir Cleges called his son, and opened the basket, and showed the marvellous cherries to the man. When he saw them, and foresaw what great gifts they would draw from the King, he allowed Sir Cleges to enter, on condition that he promised him a third of what King Uther gave him.

The knight agreed, and, passing in at the gate, soon came to the door of the hall; and there stood the usher, grim and tall, with his staff in his hand. He too spoke very roughly to the beggar, as he seemed to be, and only allowed him to pass the door on condition that he too received a third of the King's gift. Inside the hall the steward met him, and would have turned him out at once had not he seen the cherries and made the same bargain as the others.

Then Sir Cleges made his way to the King's room, opening out of the hall, and, kneeling down, presented his gift. King Uther was much astonished and delighted, and at once bade the beggar ask whatever he would, saying it should be granted him. And this was the request of Sir Cleges, who was inwardly raging at the way he had been treated by the King's underlings.

"Grant me, I pray you," said he, "twelve strokes to be given to whom I please."

"Far better," answered Uther, "had you asked gold or land, for you look in sore need of both."

But the knight replied: "You promised I should have what I asked, O King, and of that am I right glad." The King was very sorry; but he could not take back his words, so he gave him leave to "deal twelve strokes when and where he would."

Then the knight went out to teach a lesson of charity, and he certainly taught it in no gentle way. He entered the hall, and sought out the proud steward among all the lords who were present there, and gave him a blow with his staff which knocked him to the ground, and then, fulfilling his promise of a third of the King's gift, he gave him three strokes more, until the steward cried: "Sir, for thy courtesy, strike me not again."

Sir Cleges then went to seek the usher. "Have here thy promised part of my gift," said he, and gave him four such blows as would prevent him showing anyone the way for a very long time. Lastly, he went out to the porter, and treated him in the same way, saying grimly: "Now thou hast the third part of my gift, according to our agreement."

When Sir Cleges went back into the hall he found the King had taken his place there, and was listening to the songs of a harper. Now, when Sir Cleges had been rich he had been very kind to this harper, who now, seeing the poor attire of his benefactor, made songs about him, telling the King of his generous acts, and reminding him how in old days he had been one of his bravest followers. Then the King, looking upon Sir Cleges, recognised his old knight, and received him with joy, and asked him what he had meant by his mysterious request, and when Sir

Cleges told him all, he was greatly amused and delighted. Moreover, he ordered that rich clothes be given to the knight and his son, and that his wife and the other children should be fetched ; and he gave him part of Cardiff Castle for his own, and much store of money, so that Sir Cleges and his wife Claris lived there happily for the rest of their lives.

From the Old English Metrical Poems. Thirteenth century.

The Story of Guy of Warwick

EARL ROHAUNT was lord not only of Warwick, but also of Oxford and Buckingham; and he had one daughter, Felice, as learned as she was beautiful. As his lands were so wide, he put the management of most of them into the hands of his steward, Segurd of Wallingford, who had one son, named Guy. This Guy, a graceful, brave, and comely youth, became cup-bearer to the Earl, and, as he lived in the castle, was known as Guy of Warwick.

It was part of Guy's duty to look after the welfare of the ladies of the castle, and hence he often came across the fair Felice, and so it happened that he fell deeply in love with her. But she only knew him as the lad who waited behind her father's chair or held the bowl of water in which she might wash her hands after meat, so when he asked her to marry him, she haughtily refused. He would not take her refusal, however; and when she saw that he was a goodly youth, and that he loved her very dearly, she had pity on him, and told him that if he could be made a knight, she might become his wife.

This was no hard matter to accomplish, for he had already won much favour at the hand of Earl Rohaunt. Within a few days he had been dubbed a knight, and in all haste sought his fair lady, and begged her again to

marry him. But Felice treated him very coldly, saying that the mere name of knight meant nothing, and that she would never marry him till he had performed such deeds of glory that there should be no one like him in all the world. When he had shown himself the "flower of all chivalry," then would she marry him, and not before. So Sir Guy said farewell to the Earl and to his parents, and went off to seek adventures in the wide, wide world.

The first place he stayed at was Rouen, where a very magnificent tournament had just been proclaimed in honour of the beautiful Princess Blanchefleur, daughter of the Emperor of Germany. A number of famous knights had come to contend at the tournament; and the prize for the winner was a milk-white falcon, a white horse, and two white greyhounds, and, in addition, the winner might claim the hand of the Princess in marriage if he pleased.

Sir Guy was delighted with this chance of adventure. Every day he contended with the most renowned knights in Christendom, and every time he was victorious. At the end of the tournament the prize was awarded unanimously to Sir Guy of Warwick. But when a messenger came to Guy, bringing the awards and offering the hand of the Princess, the faithful knight sent a respectful and friendly message to Blanchefleur, but would not even stay to see her. And his rich prize he sent to England, to be laid at the feet of Felice.

For a whole year he travelled about, attending every tournament, and winning the prize at each, until he was well known as the bravest and most accomplished knight in Christendom. Then he determined to return home, and, after visiting the Court of King Athelstan in London,

he went to Warwick, where Earl Rohaunt, her parents, and all the castle folk received him with joy and honour. Only the fair Felice still looked coldly at him; telling him that, though he was one of the most renowned knights in Christendom, he was not yet acknowledged by everyone to be without a single rival. So, though she was now proud to call him her knight, she sent him away again to reach the very topmost pinnacle of glory. In vain his parents tried to keep him back; he was soon a wanderer once more, with a little band of brave knights as his companions.

Many a fight he took part in, and many a good blow he struck, until at length he set forth to fight for the Grecian Emperor, who was besieged in Constantinople by the Saracen Soudan and his army. The Emperor received the famous knight with much joy, and promised him, as a reward for his help, the hand of his beautiful daughter Loret. As usual, Sir Guy was victorious in every battle, and this made the Soudan so angry that he determined to make a secret assault on the city at the head of all his forces. The knight learnt this by means of spies, and, having arranged his men beforehand, met the assault of the Saracen with such a furious attack that fifteen acres of ground before the city were covered with the bodies of the enemy, and Constantinople was delivered.

But a great danger now threatened the brave Sir Guy. Sir Morgradour, the steward of the Emperor of Germany, and one of his own knight companions, had fallen in love with the Princess Loret, and determined to win her hand and the crown of Constantinople by getting rid of Guy of Warwick. Knowing that the Soudan had sworn to kill every Christian who fell into his power, Sir Morgradour

suggested to the Emperor that one of his Court should bear a proposal to the Soudan offering to settle the quarrel by single combat between a Christian and Saracen champion. To this the Emperor agreed, and made a proclamation in the Court, asking who was willing to become the bearer of this proposal to the Soudan. No one spoke, till, as Sir Morgradour hoped, Guy of Warwick sprang from his seat, and demanded to be the bearer of the message.

The Emperor, alarmed at the idea of this danger for his proposed son-in-law, tried to persuade him not to go, saying that the proposal was only meant to try the spirit and courage of his subjects. But Guy would not hear a word. He leaped on his horse without touching the stirrup, clad in his suit of armour, and rode forth through the tents of the Saracen host, until he came to a pavilion in which was set a great carbuncle stone, and this he knew to be the Soudan's dwelling.

The Soudan was sitting at meat with his followers, and Sir Guy, riding up to the table, proceeded to deliver his message in no very polite terms. The Soudan was silent with astonishment at first, but directly he could speak he ordered Sir Guy to be seized and put to death. But this was easier to order than to do; and meantime the knight made a rush upon the Soudan, cut off his head, picked it up with one hand, while he slew half-a-dozen Saracens with the other, leaped upon his horse, and rode off through the astounded host. In this way he delivered the Emperor from all his foes. Meantime, so long had Guy of Warwick been absent from his native land that he had almost forgotten the beautiful Felice, and when the Emperor urged him to marry his daughter

Loret, he agreed to do so. While preparations were being made a strange companion was added to his retinue.

One day he was riding with the Emperor, when he saw a terrible fight between a lion and a dragon. Sir Guy could never see a fight of any kind without wanting to be in the thick of it, and, seeing the lion was hard pressed, he rushed forward, and after a terrific combat killed the dragon, and cut off his head. When this was done he turned his horse, and would have ridden away, but to his surprise the lion followed him, and ran before him like a dog, leaping up to his horse's neck. At first Guy thought he meant mischief, and, getting off his horse, prepared to fight him, but directly he alighted the lion lay down like a lamb, and licked his feet. So the knight rode on, with the creature at his side; and everywhere he went he was followed by the lion, who lay by his chair at table and before his bed at night.

By this time all was ready for the marriage, and a great feast was prepared, at which it was arranged that Sir Guy should have half the empire, and the rest at the Emperor's death.

But, strange to say, although so many years had passed since he had seen his former love, the sight of the wedding ring brought back all his affection for Felice, and he was filled with shame that he should have thought of deserting her. "No other maid my love shall have," he said to himself; but the difficulty was to avoid the marriage with Loret without mortally offending the Emperor. Worry made him ill for a time, and caused a welcome delay, and then an unexpected incident settled the matter. Sir Morgradour, who still hoped to do Guy an ill turn, was one day prowling about the gardens of the palace, when he

found Guy's lion, his faithful guardian, asleep in an arbour. The cruel and cowardly knight dealt the poor beast a blow with his sword so hard that the lion was only just able to crawl to his master's chamber, where he lay at his feet, and died. Sir Guy was bitterly grieved at his loss, and swore to kill whoever had struck the blow. A maiden of the Court had watched the scene, and now told what had occurred, and Guy promptly revenged the death of his favourite. But Sir Morgradour had been the steward of the Emperor of Germany, and a quarrel seemed likely to occur between the two rulers on his account. To prevent this, Guy, glad of the excuse, left the Court, and set out for England.

During all these years Felice had found leisure to regret her former coldness to her faithful lover, and many a time she wished for his return. In those days it was difficult to get news from distant lands ; but pilgrims occasionally visited the Court of the Earl of Warwick, and of these, one and all sang the praises of that marvellous knight, Sir Guy.

At length she heard that the county of Northumberland was being laid waste by a terribly fierce dragon, " as black as any coal." No man could pierce his body for its hardness ; he had claws like a lion and great wings for flight. Then came the joyous news that a stranger knight had appeared upon the scene, and after a tremendous conflict had slain the dragon, and cut off his head. The rumour began to spread that the stranger was none other than the famous Guy of Warwick, and, sure enough, within a short time he appeared at the Earl's Court. Then he presented himself before Felice, and told her how he had sped, of his many adventures and of how an emperor had been eager to give him half his kingdom, and his

daughter for a wife. "And all this I forsook truly for thee, Felice," said Sir Guy.

Then Felice confessed her own love for the brave knight, and ere long the marriage bells were ringing from every tower in the county of Warwick for the fair Felice and for the brave Sir Guy.

Thirteenth or early fourteenth century.

The Story of Sir Eglamour

THERE once lived a certain count called Prinsamour, who had a very beautiful daughter, Chrystabel by name. When she grew up, her father wished her to make a grand marriage ; but she was not so ambitious, and looked with kindness upon a handsome young knight of the court, named Eglamour.

The moment Sir Eglamour first set eyes on her he loved her very deeply ; but it was a long time before he could summon up courage to ask her to be his wife. To his great joy she promised to marry him, if he could gain her father's consent.

But when Sir Prinsamour heard this, he was very angry, for it threatened to disappoint his high hopes, and he at once began to think out a plan by which he could get rid of Sir Eglamour. He said that the man who wished to marry his daughter must win her by accomplishing three noble deeds, each of which would expose him to very great risk of his life.

Nothing daunted, Sir Eglamour waited to hear what was required ere the precious prize could be won.

Then the count said : " A short distance from here you will find a forest of noble trees, belonging to a most terrible giant, called Maroke. In this forest are three harts, remarkable for their size and swiftness. You must chase

one of these animals, but you will afterwards have to fight the giant Maroke. Think well, therefore, whether you have strength for such an undertaking."

Sir Eglamour willingly accepted this enterprise, and hastened to tell fair Chrystabel what had passed. The maiden at once informed him that she possessed a wonderful greyhound, from whom no hart could ever escape, and gladly gave it to her lover, together with a magic sword. With these gifts from his lady Sir Eglamour set off, and soon entered the forest. The great size of the trees and of the harts astonished him not a little; but in a very short time the greyhound pulled down the largest of the animals. Forthwith Sir Eglamour blew the death note upon his horn, and proceeded to carry off the venison. But he soon encountered the giant, much enraged, who at once aimed a blow at him with an enormous club, which would then and there have settled the matter, but that at the same moment Sir Eglamour drew his sword, which shone so brightly that it rendered the giant perfectly blind. Despite this, however, the battle raged for two whole days, until at length, very early on the third day, the knight found his opportunity, and struck the giant dead to the ground. Then Sir Eglamour cut off his head, and carried it, together with the venison, to his sovereign; and all save the count received him with congratulations.

The second quest was to bring from a distant land the head of an enormous boar, whose tusks were a yard long, and who had devoured most of the inhabitants of that country; and after resting three days the knight departed. Travelling by land and sea, he reached at length a vast forest, and luckily came at once upon the monster, as he was returning from his morning bath in the sea.

The boar saw the knight first, and immediately rushed to the attack. In a short time he had managed to kill his adversary's horse, and Sir Eglamour was forced to continue the battle on foot. For two days and a half they fought, and at length, with a last effort, the knight rushed to close quarters, and cut off the boar's head with a mighty blow. When the people of the land saw that their enemy was dead, they came out to thank Eglamour; and their King gave him a magic ring, which would preserve its wearer from all perils by land or sea.

Thus Sir Eglamour returned joyfully with the boar's head on his spear, but again the count received him so coldly that the young knight perceived that he did not mean to keep his promised word. So before beginning his last enterprise he prevailed upon Chrystabel to consent to a secret marriage, in order that her father's false intentions should be frustrated. Then he presented himself before the count, who ordered him to go to Rome to kill a terrible dragon, which was ravaging the land. This task was the most perilous of all, but Sir Eglamour did not hesitate, and at the end of his long lourney he found the dragon, and fearlessly attacked it. The fight was long and fierce, and the knight well-nigh overcome. In the end he managed to kill the monster, but so severely was he wounded that he lay ill for many months. In due time his strength was restored, and he returned, carrying the head, tail, and wings of the dragon. But to his great grief Chrystabel had vanished. The count had discovered the secret marriage, and when a fair boy was born to Chrystabel, he was so furious that he put the young mother and her babe on board a boat without sail, oars, or rudder, and they drifted out to sea to perish. But Sir Eglamour had left

the magic ring as a keepsake with his wife, and under the protection of this she and the child were driven by the winds to the coast of Egypt, where the king of that country received them with the greatest kindness. At his court the boy, who was called Degrabell, grew up to be a brave and handsome knight. His mother in the course of years became more lovely than she had been as a girl, and at length her beauty moved the King to try to persuade her to marry again. She was very unwilling to do this, for she had never forgotten Sir Eglamour, but at last, to escape his persuasions, she promised to marry the knight who could overcome her son, Sir Degrabell. The first to try the combat was the King himself ; but he was quickly overthrown. Then many others came forward, and amongst them Sir Eglamour himself, who had spent these long years fighting in the Holy Land. One after another fell before Sir Degrabell, but when it came to the turn of Sir Eglamour, he unhorsed the young man with the utmost ease. Upon this Chrystabel hastened forward, in alarm for her son and in terror of the unknown knight ; but to her surprise she saw upon his shield the device of a ship of gold, sailing amid high waves, with only a lady and child on board. You can guess how great was her joy when she thus found that the stranger knight was her long-lost husband. Their son, young Degrabell, who had risen unhurt from his fall, joined in their delight at this reunion ; and finding that the count was dead, they returned, all three, to their own country, and lived happily ever after.

From a Middle English Romance. Probably early fourteenth century.

The Story of Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight

I. THE COMING OF THE GREEN KNIGHT

IT was Christmas-time at the Court of King Arthur, that famous King of Britain, and all was joy in the halls and chambers of the palace at Camelot.

Lovely ladies and brave knights danced and sang together, and had a right merry time until the hour of the great feast, which was held to celebrate the New Year.

To this feast were bidden all the lords and ladies of the Court, at the head of whom sat Arthur's Queen in a beautiful robe embroidered with gems. Lower down at the same table sat the squires and pages and ladies-in-waiting, when they had done their duty of attending on the wants of their masters and mistresses.

One, however, among this gay company sat at the board with a gloomy face and downcast air—and this was King Arthur himself. He would not touch food, nor even sit still for long, but walked up and down with restless looks. Presently he told the reason why. For years it had happened that at each New Year one of the knights had performed some marvellous deed, but this year nothing of the kind had occurred. This vexed the King, and though he joined with his friends in talk, he would not

eat nor rest till he had witnessed some strange or noble adventure. Beside his seat on the raised platform sat his favourite nephew, Sir Gawayne, who had lately been made a knight, together with others of his special friends. Still the King would not take his seat. At last, with a great blast of trumpets, the feast was served.

Before each pair of guests were set twelve silver dishes containing different kinds of meat, beside flagons of wine and beer ; but scarcely had they begun to eat when with a crash the hall door was thrown open, and a knight on horseback rushed into the room. He was of immense height, with a very broad chest and shoulders, and he was clothed entirely in green. A richly embroidered green cloak, trimmed with fur, fell from his shoulders, a green hood was thrown back from his hair, and bright golden spurs gleamed from his green stockings. Even his belt and the stones which shone in it were of the same hue. He sat upon a green saddle, embroidered very beautifully with birds and flies ; and the horse upon which he rode was as green as grass. Its hair was decked with golden threads and its tail bound with a green ribbon. A great beard like a bush fell upon the knight's breast : he looked like one who could give hard blows if occasion offered. In his hands, however, he carried neither spear nor shield, but in one a holly bough, and in the other an axe, the edge of which gleamed as bright and keen as a razor.

In this array the Green Knight entered the hall. He bowed to no one, but gazed around him, saying in a loud voice : " Where is the governor of this company ? I would speak reason with him."

And, having said this, he gazed at each knight in turn, as

though he would discover by their looks which of them had the most renown.

A great silence had fallen on that gay company. Never before had they seen so strange a figure as this Green Knight, and, partly from fear and partly from politeness towards their host, they answered nothing. But Arthur stood up on the raised dais, and welcomed the stranger with kindly words. "Alight from your horse," he said, "and stay a while with us, so that we may know your will."

"Nay," said the knight; "I must not linger here. But I have heard of your noble followers, and also of your courtesy to strangers, and I come to seek the most valiant man in your Court, that I may try him. That I am come with no hostile intent you may see by my holly branch, though at home I have both shield and spear to use at need. And now I pray you to grant the sport I ask."

Then Arthur told him that he should not fail in that brave throng to find an opponent worthy of him, saying: "If it is a battle you crave, you shall quickly find one to fight with you."

"Nay," answered the Green Knight, looking around in scorn; "I seek no fight with these. Here are but beardless children, no fair match for me. What I ask is but to play at a Christmas game. There are plenty of brave men here; let one stand forth and strike a blow with this axe of mine, which shall be his reward for that deed; with it he shall strike, and I will abide the stroke. All I demand is that I am allowed to give him a blow in return within a twelvemonth and a day."

At these words a deep silence fell upon the Court; while all men, both high and low, stared in dismay upon the

stranger knight. But the Green One laughed a scornful laugh, rolled his red eyes around, bent his green brows, and waved his beard to right and left as he cried:

"What! Is this Arthur's Court? Truly it is with ease that the glory of the Round Table is overturned with a word of one man's speech!"

Then Arthur blushed for shame that such words should be spoken, and in hot anger he said: "Not so! No man is afraid of your great words in this company. Give me the axe, and you shall have your will."

At once the Green Knight leaped to the ground, and handed the King his axe, and, while Arthur flourished it right and left to try its weight, the stranger, carelessly stroking his beard with one hand, drew down his coat with the other, and prepared to meet the blow. But before aught could be done Sir Gawayne had sprung from the dais, and, bending before the King, said: "I beseech thee, Sir King, let this undertaking be mine."

Then as the King hesitated, and would have refused, Sir Gawayne explained that it was not fair nor seemly that Arthur should do this deed, while so many bold ones were anxious to win renown.

"I know," said he, "that I am the weakest of all these noblemen, and that my life would be the least loss of any of them; but I am ready, and more than ready, to meet this knight, and as you are my uncle, and I have asked first of all, I pray you grant me this boon."

All the rest of the nobles then joined in, and petitioned Arthur to "give Gawayne the game."

So the King bade his young nephew rise and take the axe; and he blessed him, wishing him good luck, and telling him to keep steady both heart and hand. Then

Sir Gawayne took the axe, and boldly faced his opponent. The Green Knight looked at him with interest, and asked his name, and whether he would abide by the agreement.

"In good faith," replied the youth, "I, Gawayne, will give you one stroke, and a twelvemonth after, whatever shall happen, I will take another from you, with what weapon you please."

"It gives me joy, Sir Gawayne," said the Green Knight, "to think that I shall receive a blow from you, but you must swear to me that you will seek me to receive the blow in return."

"Where shall I seek you?" asked Sir Gawayne. "Tell me your name and abode, and I will find you, by my sure faith."

"When you have smitten me," said the knight, "then will I tell you my home and name; and if I do not speak at all, then so much the better for you. Take now your weapon, and let us see what sort of blow you can give."

"Gladly, sir, forsooth," quoth Sir Gawayne.

The Green Knight forthwith put his long hair aside, and, stooping forward a little, showed his bare neck to the axe; and Sir Gawayne, with one mighty blow, cut his head right off, so that it fell to the ground and rolled among the feet of the guests.

But the Green Knight neither faltered nor fell. Rushing amongst them, he picked it up, leaped into the saddle, and, turning round to them, held up the head, which opened its eyes, and addressing Sir Gawayne, said: "Look you, be ready as you have promised, and seek me till you find me. Get you to the Green Chapel, there to receive a blow on New Year's morn. See that you fail not. Come, or be called recreant for ever."

Forthwith the knight rushed out of the hall, still carrying his head in his hand.

Then King Arthur laughed aloud with joy at such an adventure, and strove to cheer the Queen, who was much dismayed at so strange a sight, saying: "Dear lady, be not afraid; such marvels well become the Christmas season. Now may I go to meat with a glad heart, for I have seen a wondrous adventure." Then he smiled at Sir Gawayne, and bade him hang up his axe and sit down to the table. And they all feasted happily until the day was ended.

II. THE JOURNEY OF SIR GAWAYNE

As the year passed on, the strange adventure of the Green Knight was at first often discussed at the Court; but gradually it faded from remembrance, and became almost forgotten. Spring-time came, and the groves grew leafy, and the birds sang for joy of the summer at hand. Then the soft winds of summer blew over the sweet flowers wet with dewdrops. But soon came harvest-time and blew the dust about; the leaves dropped from the trees and the grass turned grey, and before they knew it winter had come again.

Then began Sir Gawayne to think of his dread journey. On All Hallows E'en the King made a feast in honour of his nephew; but none were very gay, for all began to remember what was at hand. When the feast was over, Sir Gawayne knelt before the King, and said: "Now, my lord, I ask leave of you to depart, for I am bound to-morrow to seek the Green Knight."

Then all the knights crowded round, with sorrow in their hearts, and began to give good counsel and comfort to the young knight. But he answered them bravely, and said : " Why should I fear ? What should a man do but face his peril with a bold heart ! "

So on the morrow he asked for his armour, and they prepared to put it on. A carpet was spread on the floor, on to which he stepped, and the work of fastening on the armour was begun. He was first arrayed in a silken vest, then steel shoes were fastened on his feet, and long steel gaiters on his legs. These last were continued almost to the waist in what were known as " greaves." Then came the steel breastplate, with well-burnished plates for the arms and elbows, and gloves of jointed steel for the hands. Over all this was placed the coat of richly ornamented metal, spurs were fastened on his heels, and his sword tied to his belt with a silken girdle.

In this brave array the knight took leave of King Arthur and the Court, and mounted on Gringolet, his horse, whose harness glittered like the gleam of the sun. They handed him his helmet, which, after ancient custom, he kissed before putting on his head, and as he did so the diamonds set round it in a band sparkled like the stars in heaven. Then he lifted up the shield, on which was shown a curious device, called a " pentangle," painted in bright gold. This pentangle was known as the " endless knot," for no one could say where the figure began or ended ; and its five angles or corners were to remind the knight that he must keep his five wits bright and clear. Then Sir Gawayne reached for his lance, and, bidding a last farewell, spurred up his horse, and rode on his way, leaving much sorrow behind him.

It was a long and lonely road on which the knight now found himself. Mile after mile he travelled, and yet he met no man, and had no one to talk to but his horse. At last he reached the borders of North Wales, and entered a great wilderness of land called Wirral. There he found but few who loved either God or man, and none could give him tidings of the Green Knight or the Green Chapel. Many a steep hill and deep river did he pass on his lonely way; and nowhere did he find a friend, but often had to fight for his life with evil men, as well as with serpents, wolves, and boars. The weather, too, grew so bitterly cold that he hardly knew how to endure it. For the rain fell, and drenched him with water; and then came the frost and bitter wind, and froze him stiff, so that his head was hung round with icicles. He had little food and little rest, and there in peril he travelled on till Christmas Eve. When the dawn of the next day broke, Sir Gawayne found himself in a deep forest full of very ancient oak-trees, on the branches of which sat a multitude of sad little birds piping piteously because of the intense cold. The knight by this time was very heavy at heart, for it seemed as though he would spend the happy Christmas-tide out in the cold and wet among the shivering birds. Suddenly, however, he saw something gleam among the oak-trees, high up on a hill in the midst of the forest, and as he rode towards it, he saw that it was the gateway of a beautiful castle. He rode up the pathway as fast as he could, only to find the drawbridge raised from the moat and the gates shut fast.

Standing on the farther bank Sir Gawayne gazed longingly at the fair building with its strong walls and gleaming round towers; then, raising his voice in despera-

tion, he gave a great shout. Immediately a porter appeared at the entrance, and asked his errand.

"Good sir," said Gawayne, "ask the high lord of this house to grant a weary traveller a lodging."

"You are welcome to dwell here as long as you like," was the ready answer. The drawbridge was let down, and the gate opened wide to receive him.

The first thing that every good knight sees to is the stabling of his horse, and directly that was done, Sir Gawayne gladly let himself be conducted to the great hall, where one man took his helmet and another his sword, and all pressed round him to do him some service. A huge fire burned gaily in the midst, and as they brought him towards it, the lord of the castle came running from his own room, embraced him warmly, and bade him welcome. The knight returned his embrace, and then looked with interest at his host. He was a great, tall man, with a broad beard of the colour of beaver, and his face was as red as fire, but he seemed full of kindness and hospitality. Calling a page to wait upon Sir Gawayne, he led his guest into a bedchamber decked with silken curtains and rich tapestry. There Gawayne took off his armour and put on fine robes, which became him so well that he looked the comeliest of knights. A chair was placed for him close to the fireside, and there, after he had washed, a delicious meal was set before him, with all kinds of dainties and rich wines.

When he had eaten they all began to ask him questions, and when he told them that he came from Arthur's Court there was great joy in the hall. For everyone had heard the fame of Arthur, and each began to say to the other: "Now shall we see courteous manners and

hear noble speech, for we have among us the flower of chivalry."

Meantime there passed through the hall two ladies, one of whom was the wife of the lord of the castle. Very fair was she, and a great contrast to the other, who led her by the hand. For the latter was yellow and wrinkled, broad and awkward of figure, and evidently very ugly, though most of her face was hidden. Then Sir Gawayne, with knightly courtesy, bowed low before them, and, according to custom, begged leave to serve the fair mistress of the castle as her true servant. Thus, talking together, they sat by the fire, while wine and spices were served; and much fun was made when the lord of the house took off his hood, and, hanging it on a spear, promised it to any one of his followers who made the others laugh most. So night drew on, and Sir Gawayne, being very weary, retired to rest.

The next day was the joyous feast of Christmas; and for three days high revels were held within the castle walls, to which many guests were bidden. Everyone was kind to Gawayne, but most of all the lord of the castle and his fair lady.

At length the guests began to depart, and Sir Gawayne's heart grew heavy as he thought of leaving those hospitable walls. At the first mention of such a thing, however, his host assured him that he held it a great honour to entertain such a guest, and begged him to stay longer. Then, as Gawayne hesitated, the lord asked him kindly what noble deed had driven him from Arthur's Court at Christmas-time; to which the knight replied that a high errand, and one that must soon be performed, had driven him forth to a certain place. "And I would," he added, with

a sigh, "that I knew where to find it, for I would not for the world fail to be there on New Year's morning. 'Tis the Green Chapel I seek, and a Green Knight who dwells there; therefore, if you have heard of him, I pray you tell me where he is to be found, for the time grows very short, and I would sooner die than fail on my errand."

At this his host gave a great laugh, and said: "Do not trouble about the Green Chapel, for when the time comes I will show you the way. It is not more than two miles from the castle, so you may sleep here at your ease on New Year's Eve, and yet keep your tryst on New Year's morn."

Then Gawayne was very glad, and joyfully consented to wait a while at the castle until the appointed day arrived. One request only did his host make, and that was that, while he went hunting early next morning, Sir Gawayne would stay at home and amuse his wife. When the knight agreed, he made this further stipulation, saying: "Whatever I win in the wood shall be yours, if you will give to me whatever you win at home."

The bargain was made, and they went happily to rest.

III. SIR GAWAYNE KEEPS HIS TRYST

When Gawayne had gone to rest, the lord of the castle said to his lady: "I have devised a plan to try the honour and good faith of this young knight. He is bound to keep tryst on New Year's morn and to perform a hard task. Do you now meet him to-morrow while I am hunting, and persuade him not to fulfil his agreement, giving him some token of your good will towards him that

he may not guess your purpose. For he seems too gentle and yielding to be of knightly stuff, and whether he is true knight or not I wish to know ; but if he holds out, and keeps his word, he may meet his death on New Year's morn."

To this the lady willingly agreed, for she thought it a sad pity that so fair a youth should die so soon, and prepared to do all that her husband wished.

Next morning, before daybreak, the bugles sounded amidst the barking of the hounds, and the lord of the castle mounted his horse, and rode off to the hunt.

When it grew light, Sir Gawayne arose and sought the hall, where he was soon joined by the lovely lady of the house. She greeted him very kindly, saying that she felt it an honour to entertain so noble a knight ; but Gawayne protested that he was but her servant, and willing to serve her in all things.

" If that is so," said the lady, smiling upon him, " you will do well to go no farther, but to stay here with us for a long, long while." Then Sir Gawayne shook his head sadly, for he remembered his promise. The lady pretended to be offended, saying that he did not really care to do her will. " I do not believe you are Gawayne in truth," said she, " for he would ere this have done what a lady asked him. But, since you will not listen to me now, promise me to stay at home to-morrow morning and talk with me again, and meantime take this kerchief in token of my good will."

The rest of the day passed happily enough in talk and merriment, in which both the older and the younger lady took their full share with the knight. And at length the hunters returned home. Sir Gawayne hurried out to

meet his host, who greeted him courteously, and bade all the household to assemble in the hall. A great stag slain by his hand was then brought in and laid upon the floor, and, calling Gawayne, he asked if he had not done a good day's work.

"Indeed, yes," said the knight. "Here is finer venison than I have seen in winter-time for seven years past."

"I give it you all, Gawayne," said his host, "according to the agreement we have made together."

"And I," replied Gawayne, giving him the silken kerchief, "give to you, according to that same agreement, what I have gained whilst I remained at home."

"And where did you get this?" asked his host.

But Gawayne answered: "Ask me no more, for we did not agree to explain things, but only to exchange what we each obtained."

The lord of the castle seemed quite satisfied, and they went happily together to supper.

That night the same agreement was made, and at cock-crow the lord of the castle again set off a-hunting. Once again, when Sir Gawayne had risen, the lady approached him, and began to beg and pray him not to leave her on New Year's Day. "I will give you anything in the world if you will promise me this," said she.

"I must not promise that," replied the steadfast knight, though he longed to do something to please the beautiful dame.

Then said she: "I would like to know why you, who are so young and active, are ready to give up your life to this unknown enemy; you ought to be glad of the chance of escape. Why is it, pray, that you refuse me?"

"I am Arthur's knight," replied Gawayne, "and your true servant while I may live."

Then the lady gave him a ring in token of good will, and said no more.

Meantime the hunters were busy with a great boar, which, after killing three men and several dogs, had turned to bay in a hole in a rock by the side of a brook. No one dared approach him except the master, who alighted from his horse, and sought to attack him with his sword. But the boar rushed upon him, with the foam dropping from his huge tusks, and it was only by great skill that he managed to put an end to the wild beast. Then with much noise of bugles and baying of dogs the boar's head was placed upon a spear, and carried home before the lord of the castle. Sir Gawayne was quickly summoned to see the head and hear the description of the huge boar, and was full of admiration.

"Now, Gawayne," cried the host, "all this spoil is yours according to our bond. What have you for me in return?"

Then the knight gave him the ring which the lady had given him; at which the lord of the castle embraced him warmly, saying that he was the pleasantest guest he had ever entertained.

That night Sir Gawayne begged his host to let him depart on the morrow, for he feared lest the persuasions of that fair lady should act against his honour. But the lord of the house assured him that he would reach the Green Chapel on New Year's morn, and begged him to stay another night on the same agreement as before.

Next morning the master was away very early after a fox; while Gawayne, waking in the clear, frosty light

from a terrible dream of the Green Chapel, arose, and sought the hall. There, as he sat in heavy thought, that lovely lady came again to him, and besought him with many gentle words to lay his sadness aside, and give up all idea of keeping his tryst, bidding him enjoy his life, and be merry while he could, and to think no more of the Green Knight. Sir Gawayne was hard pressed, for his life was very dear to him; but he dreaded lest he should become a traitor to his King and a recreant knight, and would not listen to her words. Then the lady wept for him, and gave him a green silk girdle, bidding him keep it in remembrance of her, and tell no one of the gift. This Gawayne was unwilling to do; but she insisted, saying: "Whoever is girded with this girdle cannot be very sorely wounded or slain." Then the knight thought of his coming adventure at the Green Chapel, and, though it went against his conscience, he agreed to keep the gift a secret.

That night the master brought home only the skin of a fox, which he gave to Gawayne, but received nothing in return. When bed-time came, Sir Gawayne bade his host farewell, and, thanking him for his happy visit, asked that he would send a man with him to show him the way to the Green Chapel in the morning. A servant was given him for that purpose, and, after taking a sorrowful leave of the ladies, Sir Gawayne retired to bed. Little did he sleep, however, for he had much to think about, and all too soon the morrow came.

New Year's morn was dark and stormy, and the dales were full of snowdrifts as Sir Gawayne rode forth. He had put on his armour, though it was covered with rust, and round his waist he wrapped the lady's gift. The gates

were opened, and the knight passed out, accompanied only by his guide, into the dark of the early morning. After riding for some way the servant stopped, saying: "You are now close by the Green Chapel, and a perilous place you will find it. The lord of that place is stiff and stern—bigger than any four in Arthur's house—and none passes by the Green Chapel whom he does not beat to death with blows from his fist. It matters not whether it be churl or monk or any man else—he kills them all. Wherefore, good Sir Gawayne, have naught to do with this man, for no one can fight against him. Escape by some other way, and I swear to you most solemnly I will never say that you attempted to fly from any man."

But Gawayne replied that to flee would mark him as a coward knight, and therefore to the chapel he must go, whatever should happen to him there.

"Well," said the other, "if it please you to lose your life, put your helmet on your head and your sword in your hand, and ride down the narrow path by yonder rock. When you come to the bottom of the valley look a little to the left, and you will see the chapel and the man who guards it."

Then the servant took leave of him, and left Sir Gawayne alone. At first the knight's heart sank within him, but he pulled himself together, saying: "Now will I neither weep nor groan. I am ready and willing to do God's will and keep my word."

Then he rode down the hill into the dale, and, looking about him, saw at first only steep, high banks. At last he saw a little hill, and, alighting from his horse, began to walk round about it. Presently he came to an old cave in the

hill, and said to himself: "If this is the Green Chapel 'tis a strange place enough." Then, as he roamed about, he heard a loud noise from within, which sounded like the clattering of an axe upon a millstone. "No noise shall frighten me," said the knight boldly, and shouted aloud: "Who dwells here to hold discourse with me?"

From within a deep voice answered, bidding him stay where he was, and a little later there suddenly appeared from the mouth of the dark cavern the terrible figure of the Green Knight, just as he had looked when he first entered Arthur's Court holding in his hand a brand-new axe. He met Gawayne without any greeting; but the latter bowed courteously to him, and bade him note that he had kept his appointment to the very day.

"God preserve you," said the Green Knight; "you have timed your journey like a true man. You know our agreement, that on New Year's Day I should return you your blow. Now are we here alone; have off your helmet, therefore, and take your pay at once."

"I will not grudge you your stroke," said the brave knight; and forthwith, with undaunted countenance, he took off his helmet, and bared his neck, leaning forward for the blow. Then the man in green seized his grim weapon, and, raising it aloft, brought it down with all his force; but before it could touch him Sir Gawayne shrank a little with his shoulders.

The other held back the axe, and reproved him, saying: "Surely you are not that Gawayne of whom men think so highly, for you flinch before you are touched. I never shrank when you struck me, therefore surely I should be called the better man."

"I flinched once," said Sir Gawayne, much ashamed,

" but I will do so no more ; only give me my stroke at once, for 'tis hard to wait."

" Have at thee, then," said the Green Knight; and with that he aimed another great blow, but stayed it again as he saw Gawayne stand still as a stone.

" Now I perceive," said the knight, " that your heart is brave and unspoilt; yet must I hit thee this time."

" Strike on," said Gawayne; " you threaten too long."

Then the Green Knight raised aloft the axe, and brought it down on Gawayne's neck so that the sharp edge just cut the skin, and a few drops of blood fell on to the snow. When the young knight saw them, he unsheathed his sword, joyfully saying: " You have had your blow, and now, if you give more, I shall readily requite you. Our agreement was only for one stroke. Come now, and fight if you will."

But the Green Knight rested on his axe, and, looking kindly on the young man, said: " Bold knight, be not so wroth. I promised you one stroke, and, now you have it, be satisfied. I could have dealt thee one far worse, but I would not. With one blow I threatened you for the covenant made between us that first night ; another I gave you because you failed once, being tempted thrice. A true man should restore truly, and then he need fear no harm. I know that you are wearing my wife's girdle. I sent her to try you, and faultless you were found. Yet you sinned a little by keeping that gift secret from me, and for that I gave you that tap with my axe."

Sir Gawayne stood confounded at these words, as he recognised his host under the appearance of the Green Knight. Then: " Cursed be cowardice and want of

truth," he cried; and, unfastening the girdle, he threw it to the knight, confessing himself to have been guilty of untruth and want of faith.

Then the other said, laughing: "You have so bravely confessed your sin that I hold you as clean as if you had never done wrong. I give you, therefore, this gold-hemmed girdle to wear as a token of your adventure at the Green Chapel. And now, dear Gawayne, come again to my house, and stay there as long as you will."

"Nay indeed," said Gawayne; "too long have I lingered there already. But bliss betide you for your goodness to me; and as for the girdle, as it has made me break my troth, I will wear it in remembrance of my fault. So now, when pride shall prick me, a look at this ribbon will bring me low. Now, I pray you, tell me your right name, and I will be gone."

"I am called Bernlak of the High Desert," replied the Green Knight. "I was in old days a pupil of Morgan le Fay, who taught me how to wear this disguise, that I might test the renown of the Round Table. She is the elder lady of my race; therefore return with me, and make merry in my house."

But Gawayne refused to go with the Green Knight, and, bidding him an affectionate farewell, he rode away to Arthur's Court.

Wild ways he rode until at last he reached the Court, where all were overjoyed to see him return. The King and the knights asked him eagerly what had befallen him, and Sir Gawayne told all his adventures and the tale of the green girdle. He showed also the cut on his neck, and groaned for grief and shame, and hid his face in his hands as he cried: "Lo! this is the band of blame—a token of

my cowardice and want of truth. I must needs wear it as long as I live."

But the King and his Court comforted him, and all the knights of the Round Table agreed to wear a bright green belt for Gawayne's sake, so that he might no longer be ashamed. And Sir Gawayne had honour among the knights because he had kept his word, and had sought out the Green Knight at the time appointed.

Between 1350-1400.

The Happy Land

(*Translated by* Rev. Stopford A. Brooke, M.A.)

THIS is a poem translated from Old English, but still keeping the arrangement of words known as "alliteration." This means that, while every long line is broken into two short ones, one word at least in the second short line, or one of its syllables, begins with the same consonant letter as a word in the first short line.

This was always used in Old English poetry in place of rhyme.

"Far away from hence, I have heard it told—
Of all lands the noblest is, in the Eastern parts;
Known to folk by fame; yet that fold of earth
Unto few of the folk-owners faring over Midgard,
Easy of access is; but is far withdrawn
From the men who mischief make by the might of God!
All the land is lovely; with delights made happy,
With the very sweetest of the scents of earth.
To its blest indwellers oft the door of heaven
There is clear disclosed, clear the joy of hymns!

midgard : world.

Winsome is the wold there; there the wealds are green,
Spacious spread below the skies; there may neither snow nor rain,
Nor the furious air of frost, nor the flare of fire,
Nor the headlong squall of hail, nor the hoar-frost's fall,
Nor the burning of the sun, nor the bitter cold,
Nor the weather over-warm, nor the winter shower,
Do their wrong to any wight— but the wold abides
Ever happy, healthful there. Honoured is that land,
All ablown with blossoms. Not abrupt the mountains:
Steep the hills stand not, and the stony cliffs
Are not high upheaved, such as here with us they are!
Nought there is of dells and dales, nor of deep rock-gorges
Heights or hillocks rough; nor hangs over there
Any unsmooth thing, but the noble land
'Neath the welkin waxes with its winsome joys ablown.

. . . . . .

Never vapours full of wind, nor rain-water falleth,
Lashed the air about— but the liquid streamlets,
Wonderfully beautiful, from their wells up springing,
Softly lap the land with their lovely floods.
Winsome are the waters from the woodlands' middle
Which, at every moon, through the mossy turf of earth,
Surge up cold as sea-foam; seek their path around the trees
Gloriously from time to time.

wold: plain, meadow. *weald: wood.*

There with gladsome growths all the groves are hung,
With the wildwood blossoms. Never wither there,
Never there the fallow foliage falls upon the earth,
Fairness it of forest trees ; full of beauty are
Evermore the branches, bent adown upon the trees,
With a fruitage always fresh, fadeless day by day !
Never change is there
In the beauty of the holt ; there its holy fragrance
Wons above the winsome land ; nor is waning known
Ever through the ages, till the end He brings
To the ancient work of old who erst its making had."

fallow : yellow, russet. *wons : lives, abides.*

From the "Phœnix Poem," probably by Cynewulf.
750-790 A.D.

Sir Bevis of Hampton

I. THE EARLY ADVENTURES OF SIR BEVIS

SIR GUY, the great Earl of Southampton, had a little son called Bevis. When the boy was seven years old, a series of terrible misfortunes fell upon him. One of the Earl's knights, named Sir Murdour, who had long wished to rule in Sir Guy's place, killed his master in a forest one day, and married his wife —a wicked woman—who had never loved her first husband or her little boy. Fearing, however, that when Bevis grew older he would claim the earldom, they ordered the boy's uncle, Sir Saber, to throw him into the sea. Saber was too much afraid of them to refuse, but, hoping to save his nephew, he sold him to some Saracen traders who happened to be on shore, and by them the boy was carried off to the land of Armenia. The King of Armenia at that time was called Ermine, and he was so much struck with the handsome face and strong limbs of the little slave that he gladly received him as a present. He was soon in high favour at the Court, both with the King, and his little daughter Josian, the fairest child upon earth. So fond did Ermine become of the boy that he offered to make him his heir, and give him Josian for his wife, when he was old enough to marry, if he would give up his Christian faith and become as

one of them. But this Bevis refused to do. The King then made him his chamberlain, and promised that when he was old enough he should bear his banner to the battlefield.

At this Court Bevis soon began to win renown. In the forest near by lived a fierce wild boar of immense size, whose tusks all men dreaded, and when Bevis was about fourteen, he determined to try his strength against the beast. The foresters all tried to prevent him, for they thought he was going to certain death. They told him that the boar would not eat beech nuts or acorns, but only human flesh ; but he would not hear them. Rising very early one morning he saddled his horse, and rode off to the forest, watched with admiration by Josian from her window. Arrived at the forest he tied up his horse, and began to blow his horn. The boar, however, took no notice, and Bevis began to hunt about until he came to a place which was thickly covered with dead men's bones. Rightly guessing that he had come to the very mouth of the den, Bevis shouted out his challenge: "Rise, thou foul beast, and have battle against me!" Whereupon the boar came out, with all its bristles up, and its mouth open wide enough to swallow the boy at one gulp.

"I have got my work before me," quoth the lad.

The hunting spear which he carried was particularly strong, but it snapped into seven parts at the first blow, and though his sword stood firm, he soon found that it made no more impression on the animal than it did upon a stone. Hours passed, and, while the boy was nearly dead with fatigue, the boar became blind with fury and faint from exhaustion. At length it made a sudden dash

for the open plain, and, as Bevis followed, turned upon him, open-mouthed. Immediately our hero thrust his sword down its throat, and killed it. Then, having cut off the grisly head, he stuck it on his broken spear, and turned towards home. But the foresters, who had never dared to face the forest in bands of less than twelve at a time, were filled with envy when they saw his return, and determined to slay him, and claim the prize for themselves. They met him just as he came within sight of Josian at her window. All twelve attacked him at once, but Bevis used his broken spear head—for he had left his sword behind—to such good effect that nine were left dead on the ground. The rest fled for their lives, leaving him to return in triumph to present the boar's head to the admiring King.

About that time a neighbouring king, named Bradmond, demanded that Josian should be sent to him for his wife, and on the King's refusal he threatened to come and take his kingdom from him. An army was, therefore, prepared against him, and of this army Josian persuaded her father to make Bevis the commander. But first he was made a knight, and fair Josian, his lady-love, dressed him in his armour, and gave him a fine charger, called by the name of Arundel. Thus prepared, he rode forth to meet in single combat King Bradmond's giant standard-bearer, who laughed in scorn at the idea of fighting a mere boy such as Bevis. But Sir Bevis not only killed the giant, but also took King Bradmond prisoner, and only released him on condition that he became the vassal of his master. Then was Josian so proud of her knight that she gave up her heathen faith, and became a Christian for his sake, and they were betrothed in

secret to each other. Now, it happened that two of the knights whom Bevis had captured overheard their talk, and hurried to tell the King that his daughter had forsaken her faith. On hearing this, Ermine was very wroth, and, not daring to kill Sir Bevis openly, sent him off to the Court of Bradmond with a sealed letter, which contained the request that Bradmond would have the messenger put to death. Moreover, he would not let Sir Bevis ride upon Arundel, nor take his famous sword with him, but pointed out that, as he was going on a peaceful errand, a gentle steed and an ordinary weapon would be more suitable.

After a wearisome journey the young knight arrived at Bradmond's city, and scarcely had he entered, when he was attacked by some Saracens for not doing honour to an idol they were worshipping. Although Bevis had but a common sword he slew two hundred of these men, while the rest fled to the palace to tell the King of the slaughter. Meantime Sir Bevis entered quite unmoved, and handed the King his letter. When he had read it, Bradmond was full of joy, and began to upbraid Bevis with the deeds of valour he had done, and told him he should shortly be slain like a dog. In vain Bevis begged to be allowed to die fighting, even against sixty thousand men. He made one desperate struggle for liberty, and, being overpowered, was bound with new ropes, and set up in the hall to be mocked. They gave him food and drink, taunting him with the news that this was to be his last meal, and then took him to a dungeon, so strong that it seemed unnecessary to bind him, and, chaining him to the wall, they left him there. Searching about this dismal cell, as far as his chain would allow, Bevis presently found a short, thick piece of wood—

which he took for a weapon—and a stream of water, which ran through the place.

Before he had been there very long, two dragons crawled from a hole in the wall, intending to make a meal of the knight, but he turned on them with such courage, that after a long, fierce fight, he managed to kill them both. Here in this grim place Sir Bevis remained for seven years, during which time he was given nothing to eat but a mess of bran once a day, and all he had for meat were the " rats and mice and such small deer " that he managed to catch in his cell.

Meantime the fair Josian, much against her will, had been forced to marry another, by name King Joure. To this King, wishing to do him honour, Ermine presented Arundel and Morglay—the horse and the famous sword of Sir Bevis. Much struck with the beauty of the horse, King Joure jumped on his back, and attempted to ride him into the city ; but directly Arundel knew that it was not his own master who bestrode him, he leaped over hedges and ditches, briers and cornfields, until he succeeded in throwing the unlucky King, so that he fell on his head, and died. The horse would have been starved by the grooms in the stable for this conduct, but Josian ordered that he was to be well fed, and the ropes with which he was bound removed. And as Josian was now Queen of Mambraunt they were forced to obey her.

At last, after seven years' imprisonment, Sir Bevis had grown so weak that his gaolers determined to kill him, in order to save themselves any further trouble. So one let himself down by a cord into the dungeon, and was about to strike him dead, when Sir Bevis, with a sudden return of his old strength, killed him with his fist. He then imi-

tated the voice of the dead man, and so caused the second gaoler to descend, and on his appearance he killed him with the sword of the first. But he was now no better off, for he was quite without food and bound fast to the rock by a chain. On the third day, however, when he was nearly starving, he found his chain had become quite loose, and, freeing himself with ease, he climbed up the rope, and found himself close to the doors of the royal stable.

Within, the grooms were dressing the King's horses, with talk and laughter. What was their astonishment when the door was burst open, and an extraordinary-looking man, with a face deadly white, and long hair which trailed upon the ground, rushed in upon them! Those who did not escape were knocked down; after which Bevis armed himself at his leisure, and, saddling the best horse in the stable, galloped to the palace gates. He there woke the porter, telling him that Bevis of Hampton had escaped, and that he was in search of him. The sleepy fellow let down the drawbridge with all haste, and the knight rode off rejoicing in his freedom.

Meanwhile the porter, going his rounds, discovered the dead gaolers and the empty cell, and at once realised what had really happened. He rushed to report the loss to King Bradmond, who promptly sent for one of his knights, who possessed a marvellous horse called Truncefyce, and ordered him to pursue and kill Sir Bevis. This Truncefyce could gallop faster than the wind, and was said to be worth his weight in gold. It was not long, therefore, before the knight came up with Sir Bevis, and at once challenged him to single conflict. He thought he would have an easy task, but though Bevis was weak from want of food he

quickly put an end to his assailant, and threw himself across the saddle of the good horse Truncefyce. By this time the whole host of King Bradmond was close upon him, and so he had to ride with all his might. Unluckily, he lost his way, and came to the seashore, and while vainly trying to find a road in another direction the army once more came up with him. Determining to be drowned rather than be taken again Sir Bevis put spurs to his horse, and galloped towards the water, when Truncefyce at once took a leap of forty feet, and then carried him safely to the opposite shore. By this time, however, Bevis was so weak from want of food that he fell from the saddle, saying sadly: "If I were King of all Armenia I would gladly give my kingdom for a slice of brown bread." At length he dragged himself up again, and rode on till he reached a castle, where he begged for food. The lady of the house implored him to go away, saying that her husband was a giant, and would kill any Christian he could catch.

But Sir Bevis would not stir till he had had a meal. So the lady went to tell her husband, who came out to look at him. Now, this giant was the brother of the knight whom Bevis had just killed, and, recognising Truncefyce, he asked him gruffly where he had stolen the horse. When Bevis answered with spirit, the giant aimed a blow at him that would have put an end to any ordinary man. This Sir Bevis avoided, but it alighted, unfortunately, on good Truncefyce, and killed him on the spot.

Then Sir Bevis leaped to the ground, and with one stroke cut off the giant's head; after which he entered the castle, and ate a very hearty meal.

Sir Bevis was now comparatively at his ease; the only

thing that troubled him was the fate of his beloved Josian. It so happened that he met an old comrade as he rode on his way, who told him all that had happened, and how, though Josian had been forced to marry King Joure, she was now living as a widow in that land. The knight at once decided to return to her, and see if she still loved him, and, having dressed himself as a pilgrim, joined a band of beggars and travellers who were waiting at the gate for alms. Finding he must wait some time, he began to wander round the castle, and presently, from a turret room, he heard the voice of Josian mourning for her lost Bevis. Returning to the gates he waited till she appeared, and was at once singled out as a stranger by the lady, who asked eagerly if he had heard any news of Bevis of Hampton. He said Yes; he had often talked with him, especially of his horse Arundel, whom he would much like to see. The Queen at once led the supposed pilgrim to the stables, where he went up to the stall, and spoke to the horse. No sooner had Arundel heard the voice of his beloved master than he broke seven chains by which he was bound, and ran out of the stall.

The lady was much alarmed lest the animal should escape, and terrify the whole town; but Bevis only laughed at her fears, and, approaching his steed, jumped upon his back, and, throwing off his pilgrim's cloak, showed himself to be her long-lost knight. Then Josian entreated him to take her away from that hated castle, for while she was there she was in the power of Sir Grassy, the late King's governor, who had been left ruler of his dominions. So they escaped together from the castle, and began a perilous journey back to England.

II. SIR BEVIS WINS HIS OWN ESTATE

Sir Bevis of Hampton, with Josian, his betrothed wife, had not ridden far on their way towards England, when they met a most terrible giant. He was full thirty feet high, and covered with bristles like a pig; his great mouth was wide open, and his eyes were hollow and very far apart. He was loathly to look upon, and in his hand he carried a young oak-tree for a staff. Sir Bevis stared at him in great amazement, and asked if all men in his country were as mighty in size, and what was his name.

"My name," answered the giant, "is Ascapard. I am sent hither by Sir Grassy, the late King's steward, to bring you back again to the castle."

This was not to be borne, so they prepared to fight; and in the ensuing battle Sir Bevis proved himself so active that he was able to conquer the giant, and was about to put him to death. But Josian had pity on the great creature, and besought that his life should be spared. To this Sir Bevis at length agreed, and Ascapard, in his gratitude, became his servant from that time.

After this interlude they proceeded to the seashore—Bevis and Josian riding on Arundel, and Ascapard afoot. A merchant ship lay at anchor in the bay; but it was occupied by some Saracens, who refused to receive Sir Bevis and his companions on board. Directly the giant realised this, he promptly cleared the vessel of its owners, most of whom he dropped into the sea, and taking up Arundel, with Bevis and Josian under his arm, he embarked with them, and arrived, after a prosperous journey, at Cologne. When they reached this city, they heard

much talk of a fiery dragon which infested the neighbourhood—a creature of immense size and terrible ferocity. Hearing the groans of a knight who had been touched by the poison breathed from his mouth, Sir Bevis determined to attack the dragon, although everyone assured him that St Michael himself could not withstand the onset of such a monster.

So he set off, accompanied at first by Ascapard; but the latter, directly he heard the roar of the dragon in the distance, fled away, declaring that for all the realms of heathendom he would not stay to look upon the throat from which such a voice proceeded. Sir Bevis, therefore, was left alone, and, paying no heed to the monster's hideous yell, proceeded to attack him with his good sword Morglay.

The first lash of the dragon's tail broke one of his ribs, and knocked him down, while his sword availed nothing against the creature's scaly armour; but he returned again and again to the attack until, running backward to avoid the dragon's poisonous breath, he fell headlong into a well of water. Luckily for him, this was an enchanted well, the water of which at once healed his wounds and refreshed him for the renewed conflict. At length, however, the dragon spouted on him such a quantity of venom that he fell senseless to the ground; whereupon the creature began to lash him with his tail, until by good fortune he lashed him a second time into the enchanted well. Once more he emerged fresh and strong, which sight so disheartened the wearied monster that he began to retreat. Following him up, Bevis succeeded in cutting off about five feet of his wicked tail, and shortly after was able to cut off his head, which he brought back in triumph to Cologne.

The men of Cologne were so delighted at this deliverance from the monster, that they were ready to give Bevis anything in the world he wished.

So, after some thought, he asked for a hundred knights to fight for him, and with this little band he determined to go to Southampton and win back the estates of his father, so long enjoyed by his wicked stepfather Sir Murdour. He sailed, therefore, to a port close by Southampton, and after visiting his uncle, Sir Saber, in the Isle of Wight, he left Josian and Ascapard in his charge, and proceeded towards that town, sending a messenger on ahead to tell Sir Murdour that a knight of Brittany had just arrived, with a hundred companions, in quest of service, which they offered to him in the first instance, but should, if he refused, transfer the offer to his enemies.

Sir Murdour was delighted to accept this unexpected offer, and, little knowing who Sir Bevis really was, he received him with great ceremony, and paid him the most marked attentions. Presently the unknown knight began to ask questions as to the former owner of the castle; whereupon Sir Murdour informed him that Sir Guy, the last owner, was a man of low birth, and that his son, Sir Bevis, had turned out such a spendthrift that he had been obliged at length to sell his heritage, and leave England, for very shame of his debts. Sir Saber, he continued, had for some time past tried to wrest from Sir Murdour the land he had legally purchased from his stepson, and this was the quarrel in which he would be glad to use the services of his noble guests.

Sir Bevis could scarcely listen to this false information with patience; but he controlled his wrath, and answered calmly: "Since this is your quarrel, it might have been

easily settled by myself and my companions, had we been able to come properly equipped for a battle or a siege. Indeed, as it is, if you will lend us arms and horses, and a ship for our conveyance, we will promise to set off this very night, and not lose sight of Sir Saber till your quarrel be settled one way or the other."

Sir Murdour was only too glad to agree, and Bevis returned to the Isle of Wight with the finest horses and choicest armour in his enemy's possession. Having openly joined Saber, he sent a second messenger to Southampton, ordering him to tell Sir Murdour that he who made the agreement with him was no stranger knight, but Bevis of Hampton himself, come to avenge his own and his father's wrongs.

When this was reported to Sir Murdour, the latter snatched up a knife from the supper-table, and threw it at the messenger, but, missing him, it struck through the heart of his own son. Thus fell the hand of vengeance on him for all his wicked deeds.

Shortly after a great battle was fought between the two parties, and soon Sir Murdour and Sir Bevis met face to face. The younger knight had succeeded in knocking his enemy from his horse; but at that moment he was surrounded by his foes, so that he could not make him captive. He called loudly, therefore, on Ascapard, promising to give him his freedom if he would take Sir Murdour prisoner. Striding to the spot, the giant killed both the horse and the wicked knight himself, as he was in the act of remounting; and so the battle was won.

The countess, when she heard of her husband's death, threw herself from the top of a lofty tower, and was killed on the spot; and so there was nothing to hinder Sir Bevis

and Josian from taking possession of the castle and lands that were his rightful heritage. There they lived happily for many a long day; and it is said that Bevis, his wife, and the good horse Arundel, all died exactly at the same moment and were buried in the same spot.

Probably fourteenth century.

The Story of Sir Isumbras

I. THE SEVEN MISFORTUNES OF SIR ISUMBRAS

ONCE upon a time there lived a knight called Sir Isumbras, who had everything he wished for in the world. He was very strong and handsome; he possessed a fine castle and plenty of money; he was renowned for his courage, courtesy, and skill at the tournament; and, finally, he was happy in the love of a beautiful wife and three lovely children.

Sir Isumbras was a brave and honourable knight, but he had one great fault. His good fortune made him very proud and haughty; and in his heart he forgot whence all these blessings came, and looked upon them as the just reward for his own merit. So he had to learn a very severe lesson. It was the custom of the knight to go hunting every day, and on one special occasion he rode forth as usual, very early in the morning, with a hawk perched on his wrist and his dogs leaping round him. All at once the sky became overcast, and, looking up to see the cause, Sir Isumbras saw an angel hovering overhead on outspread wings. Dismounting from his horse, he stood trembling before the mighty presence, as in solemn words the angel reproached him for his pride, and announced that from that instant all his good fortune should end, and his pride be brought low. Full of uneasi-

ness and grief Sir Isumbras prepared to ride home again ; but scarcely had the angel disappeared, when his horse suddenly fell dead under him, his hawk dropped lifeless from his wrist, and his dogs lay gasping out their last breaths all round him. He hastened towards his castle, and soon saw a number of his servants coming to meet him. With many tears they told him that all his horses and cows had been suddenly struck dead by lightning, and his cocks and hens and geese stung to death by a plague of adders.

The knight bore the news with great resignation, and bade the men not to murmur against Providence, and hurried on. But before he had gone far, his little page ran to meet him, telling him that in his absence his castle had been burnt to the ground, that many of his servants had perished, and that only with great difficulty had his wife and children been rescued from the flames. In his joy that those he loved most dearly had been preserved Sir Isumbras gave the boy a purse of gold, and, without a word of complaint, went to find them. A doleful sight was soon before his eyes. His wife and children, with scarcely a rag upon them, sat shivering under a thorn-tree, just as they had been carried from their beds. He stood aghast at this ; but his wife cheered him with brave words, saying : " Fear nothing ; we are all safe."

Then Sir Isumbras threw off his cloak, and put it over his wife, and, stripping himself of his scarlet mantle, tore it in three pieces, wherewith to clothe his children. After this he explained to his wife the reason for all this misery, and proposed that, in order to atone for his sins of pride, they should all four make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and visit Jerusalem. So he and his wife set off, with the

three little boys, resolving to beg their bread on the way.

Seven lands they passed through on the long and difficult journey, and at length reached a great forest, through which they wandered for three days without seeing a house of any kind. They had nothing to eat but the few berries growing on the bushes, and at last the poor children, worn out with hunger, began to lag behind and cry for misery. As they went slowly forward, carrying the boys in turn, they found a wide, though shallow, river flowing swiftly right across their path. Taking his eldest son in his arms, Sir Isumbras carried him across the water, and, putting him down by a bush of broom, bade him dry his tears, and play with the flowers till his brother should come to keep him company. Scarcely, however, had the knight departed across the river, when a lion leaped out of a thicket close by, seized the child, and carried him away into the forest. When Sir Isumbras returned with the second boy, he thought the elder must have wandered some little way off, and, leaving the child with orders not to stir, he hurried back to fetch his wife and the youngest child. But directly he had gone, a huge leopard ran up, and, taking the boy in his mouth, carried him off in the same manner.

When the poor mother and father reached the spot, and could find no trace of their two children, they were full of grief ; and it was long before Sir Isumbras could comfort his wife and persuade her to continue the sorrowful journey. Three days more they travelled through that forest, and at length they came to the seashore. Down they sat and wept, for how were they to get across the sea to the Holy Land ? As they sat weeping, however,

they saw a fleet come sailing in, three hundred ships and more, richly decorated with flags and banners. In this fleet was a heathen king, called the "Soudan," who came to conquer Christendom.

Seven days had now passed since the weary pilgrims had tasted bread or meat, so directly the Soudan's galley was moored on the beach, they hastened on board to beg for food. Thinking they were spies, the Soudan ordered them to be driven ashore, but his attendants drew his attention to the fact that so tall and well-made a man must be a knight in disguise, and that though the wife was in rags, her face was "bright as blossom on tree."

The Soudan immediately sent for them, and offered Sir Isumbras as much treasure as he liked to ask for, if he would give up his belief in the Christian faith and fight for a heathen master. This the knight at once refused, saying that all he asked was a little food. But the Soudan, struck with the beauty of the lady, paid no heed to his request, but said: "Man, I will give you a great sum in gold, and seven rich robes, if you will sell me this woman. I will make her Queen of my land, and all men shall bow down to her."

"No, indeed," answered Sir Isumbras; "I will not sell my dear wife, though you slay me for it."

The Soudan, however, would take no denial. His attendants forthwith placed the promised sum of gold in the knight's mantle, seized the lady, and, having carried Sir Isumbras and his youngest son on shore, beat him unmercifully, and returned to the ship.

Meanwhile the Soudan had ordered the lady to be crowned; but before he would marry her, he meant to conquer Europe. So he prepared to send her home, with

orders that all men should obey her as their Queen. The lady, however, with many tears, besought that first she might say farewell to her husband. This was granted; and Sir Isumbras, bruised and half dead, was brought to her. Embracing him fondly, she bade him never rest till he had sought her out and rescued her. Then she kissed him and her little son, and set sail for Africa. Sir Isumbras, quite bewildered by these last misfortunes, watched the vessel till it was out of sight, and then, taking the child by the hand, returned to the forest, hoping to find another way out. But they lost their way, and, after climbing a steep hill without being able to find any sign of a house or human being, they lay down on the bare ground, and tried to fall asleep.

Next morning the unfortunate knight awoke to see the treasure given him by the Soudan carried off by an eagle, which had swooped down upon it, attracted by the scarlet cloth in which it was wrapped. Springing to his feet, Sir Isumbras pursued the bird for some way, hoping he would drop the heavy burden. The eagle, however, though flying slowly, proceeded on his course across the sea; and the knight returned with a heavy heart, for he had now no money wherewith to buy food for his son. But just as he came in sight of the place where he had left the child, he saw a unicorn bound from the forest and carry him off in its mouth. For a time Sir Isumbras lost all heart; but he remembered the lesson he had to learn, said his prayers, and proceeded on his journey alone.

II. SIR ISUMBRAS WINS HIS HAPPINESS

As the knight proceeded on his way alone, he presently heard, amid the silence of the forest, the sound of a smith's bellows. Hurrying in that direction he soon found a forge, which he entered, and asked humbly for a little food.

The smith and his men looked coldly on the stranger.

"You seem as well able to work as we are," said they. "We have nothing to throw away in charity to such as you. Go and work for your meat."

"Gladly would I do so," sald Sir Isumbras.

So they took him at his word, and, finding him ready to do the hardest kind of labour, they gave him a good meal, and forthwith set him to carry stones wherewith to build a house.

All this he did without complaint, so humble had the once proud knight become. After a while they began to teach him to be a smith, and in learning all the mysteries of his new occupation seven long years passed quickly by. The knight was by this time a very clever smith, and had employed his spare hours in forging a complete suit of armour for himself. Every year he had heard from wayfarers of the success won by the heathen Saracens, and he was full of hope that the day might yet come on which he might strike a blow for the Christian faith, and avenge the loss of his fair wife.

At length he heard that a great battle was to be fought between Christians and Saracens not far from the place where his smithy stood. Rising very early in the morning of the fight, Sir Isumbras dressed himself in the suit of

armour, and, mounted on a rough horse, which had been used at the smithy for carrying coals, rode off to the conflict. When he arrived on the battlefield, both armies began to jest at him and to make fun of his uncouth armour and steed; but Sir Isumbras took no notice, and gave his whole attention to the way in which the troops of the enemy were drawn up.

When the fight began, the knight rode into the thickest ranks of the enemy, doing tremendous deeds with his gleaming sword; but after three desperate charges his horse was slain under him. A Christian chief who had marked his courage, rode forth to his rescue, and, carrying him off to a neighbouring hill, presented him with a fine suit of armour and a gallant war-horse. Thus well equipped, Sir Isumbras returned to the fight with fresh courage. Seeing the Soudan himself on the slope of a hill, surrounded by his guard, he made a desperate rush upon him, and, though badly wounded, he never rested till he had slain him with his own hand.

All that day the fight lasted, and at the end all the Christians agreed that it was owing to the stranger knight that the battle had been won. When all was over, knights and squires came to seek Sir Isumbras, and brought him before the King of that land.

"What is your name?" asked the King.

"Sire, I am a smith's man," answered the knight. "What will ye do with me?"

The King was much puzzled, saying: "Never before knew I a smith's man to be so brave in war."

Then Sir Isumbras, weak from want of food and loss of blood, prayed to be allowed to rest and eat; to which the King gladly agreed, promising that directly he re-

covered he would make him a knight. So he was put into good hands, and in a few days was quite recovered. But he took no advantage of the King's promise, and having provided himself with a pilgrim's "scrip," or satchel, and "pike," or staff, he took his way once more to the sea, and, embarking on board a merchant ship, set sail for the Holy Land.

In the Holy Land Sir Isumbras passed seven more long years, visiting every hallowed spot, and living a life of hardship and toil. Every night he slept in the open air; his food was the scanty dole given him by charitable folk; and his pilgrim's cloak was all he had to cover him.

But at length a great happiness came to the once proud knight. One midnight, as he was sitting weeping for his sin by the side of a well close by Jerusalem, there appeared to him a bright angel, who brought him bread and wine, and said: "Pilgrim, it will be well with you. The King of Heaven greets you. Forgiven is your sin."

Directly Sir Isumbras had eaten and drunk, his strength came back to him just as when he was young and gay; his heart too was gladdened; but he was still bereft of his wife and children, and as poor as ever; and he had not been told by the angel what he should do next. So he wandered from country to country till he arrived one day at a fine town, built round a fair castle, the owner of which, they told him, was a gentle queen, who day by day presented a golden florin to every poor man who approached her gates, and for those who were in special need she was wont to give food and lodging inside the walls.

Sir Isumbras presented himself in due course, and directly it was seen how thin and badly clothed he was, they brought him into the hall, where the rich Queen sat.

Knights stood to serve her hand and foot, and all bowed down before her; but when Sir Isumbras entered in his rags the steward gave him at once a place of honour, saying: "The poor pilgrim shall sit above you all."

Quickly they brought forth meat and drink; but the knight could eat nothing, and as he looked about him at the mirth and glee and happy faces his tears fell thick and fast. This soon attracted the attention of all the company, and the Queen, pitying his secret trouble, ordered a cushioned chair to be placed near the pilgrim, and began to talk to him about his long and painful pilgrimage. But nothing could induce him to touch food; and, sick at heart because of the memories of wife and children and the old days of happiness, he craved a little time for thought and meditation in which to gain control of himself again. So the Queen left him, declaring, however, that for the sake of her dead husband, or for love of him if he still lived, she was determined to give the pilgrim a home in the castle and a servant to attend on him.

Fifteen years of toil on one side and sorrow on the other had so changed Sir Isumbras and his wife, that he never recognised her in this gentle Queen, nor had she any idea that the worn pilgrim was her gallant husband. But it was easy to see that, after the death of the Soudan, she would still be held in great honour by her Saracen subjects, who were disposed to look kindly upon all Christian pilgrims for her sake.

In the Court of this rich lady Sir Isumbras, never guessing who his benefactress really was, quickly recovered his health and spirits, and with them came the desire to take up knightly exercises, as of old.

A grand tournament was proclaimed to be held under the windows of the castle, and, to the surprise of all, the pilgrim appeared in the dress of a knight, and overthrew in succession every one of the Saracen knights who appeared in the lists. Some were killed at the first stroke of his dreadful spear; some escaped with broken bones, or were thrown into the castle ditch; and most saved themselves by headlong flight.

A short time after these gallant adventures Sir Isumbras was out for a stroll in the neighbouring forest, when he noticed a large bird's nest in a tree, from which something scarlet was hanging and waving in the wind.

Much interested, he climbed the tree, and found, to his astonishment, his own scarlet mantle, in which was still wrapped the Soudan's gold, carried off by the eagle many years before. He carried the treasure to his room, and concealed it under his bed; but the sight of it had brought back the memories of his lost wife and children, and made him feel so sad that he began to weep and lament, so that the whole Court wondered greatly at his altered countenance. The Queen was especially curious as to the reason, but could only learn from the attendants that it had something to do with a discovery found in a bird's nest. For some time Sir Isumbras kept to his own room, but directly he began to go abroad again, the Queen gave orders to her squires to search his chamber and bring the mysterious discovery to her apartment. This they did, and the sight of the scarlet and gold mantle at once made clear to the Queen the whole story. She kissed the cloak, almost fainting with joy, and bade them hasten to bring the pilgrim before her. A few words of explanation made the matter clear to both; they threw themselves

into each other's arms, and embraced with the greatest joy.

Within a short time Sir Isumbras was crowned King, and a great feast was made in his honour. To this all his Saracen subjects gladly came, but when Sir Isumbras explained to them that he expected that they would all give up their faith, and become Christians, they became very angry, and determined to depose their new-made King, and burn him alive.

The neighbouring princes joined them in their defiance, and, gathering a great army, they sent Sir Isumbras a challenge to come and fight.

Sir Isumbras was perfectly ready for the conflict. He called for his arms and his horse; but when he rode out of the castle, he found that every man had deserted him, and that he must fight single-handed against all these foes. He knew that this meant certain death, so he took a very sad farewell of his Queen, saying: "Madam, I have now to wish you good-day for evermore."

But she replied, with spirit, that she cared not to live without him, and so would die with him. She bade him, therefore, dress her as a knight, and so, wearing armour and bearing spear and shield, she accompanied him to the battle. "Against thirty thousand Saracens and more there came but these two." It was impossible that they could withstand the charge of so numerous an enemy, and they were on the point of being crushed, when three unknown knights made their appearance, and suddenly changed the fortunes of the day. The first of these rode upon a lion, the second upon a leopard, the third upon a unicorn. At the first sight of these strange figures the Saracens turned tail, and fled. But they were

quickly pursued, and thousands were left dead upon the field, killed by the claws of the lion or the leopard, by the horn of the unicorn, or by the swords of their gallant young riders.

When the day was won, you can imagine the joy of Sir Isumbras and his wife when they found that these wonderful young knights were their own three boys, who had been miraculously preserved by the wild beasts. In great happiness they returned to the city, where the penitent inhabitants were ready to do all their King bade them.

Each of the three sons became kings of neighbouring countries, whose sovereigns had been killed in the fight; and Sir Isumbras, having learnt his lesson of humility, lived happily for many long years.

From an English MS. of the sixteenth century

The Story of the Heir of Linne

THERE lived long ago in the broad lands of bonny Scotland a worthy lord, who had an only son. And as he came to lie on his death-bed, he sent for the lad, and said :

" My son, too well I know that when I am dead and gone you will waste the money and the land that I shall leave you, and one day will come to poverty."

The Heir of Linne, as the youth was called, began to say that he would be careful, and do all that he could to obey the wishes of his father, whom he loved so dearly ; but the old man bade him not make promises that he might be tempted to break, but only to assure him of one thing.

" Far away in the glen on the borders of our land," said he very earnestly, " stands a deserted cottage known as the Lonesome Lodge. Promise me that even if you sell all else you have in the world, you will never part with this. Take the key, and hang it round your neck, and remember that in the day when all your friends turn their backs upon you, and you have no place to go to, it is my desire that you go to the Lonesome Lodge, and there you will find a friend in need."

This seemed a very strange saying to the young man, but, to satisfy his father, he hung the key round his

neck; and soon after the old man died. The Heir of Linne was now quite alone in the world, for his mother had died long since. For a time he lived very quietly and sadly; but after a while his friends began to visit him again, and they brought others with them, so that the Heir began to lead a very gay life. He wasted his money right and left in entertaining and in revelry; he bought everything he wanted for himself; and as for his friends, if they were only heard to admire a horse or a dog or a golden cup, it was at once presented to them.

But money cannot last for ever, and after a time his steward, John o' Scales, came to the Heir, and told him there was no more left. Now, this John o' Scales was known to be a very clever man, and to him the Heir left all the care of his broad lands, never looking into his accounts or supervising him in any way. So when he came to his young master with a long face and a tale of empty money-bags, the Heir said quite cheerfully: "Then, John o' Scales, you must put your wits to work, and get me some money as quickly as you can."

There was one way out of the difficulty, it appeared. John o' Scales had a little money of his own in hand, and would like to buy one of the outlying farms if his master chose to sell. The Heir never thought of finding out the true value of the land, but took the money, and spent it recklessly as before. The neighbours, however, were heard to whisper that for every pound the steward paid his master, the land was well worth three.

Presently that money was at an end; but what was easier than for the steward to buy another little farm? And again the pockets of the Heir were filled. But this money was thrown away like the last, some of it in selfish pleasures,

some of it in reckless gifts to friends. Then the Heir tried to win back his losses by gambling; but, of course, that only made matters worse, until at last he became quite penniless. Then the young man went again to John o' Scales, and told him he must sell some more land. But the steward, who had grown fat and insolent of late, informed him scornfully that not only had he already parted with every rood of ground, but that the very house in which he had been born now belonged to the steward; but in an offhand kind of way he offered the young man a few pounds for the Lonesome Lodge, which, he said, was all now left of his father's great estate. The Heir was just about to accept, when he felt the little key grow heavy as it lay on his heart, and he remembered his father's words and the promise he had made. So he refused altogether to part with the Lonesome Lodge, although John o' Scales even offered its full value, and then, in his determination to have the whole estate, more than the tumble-down place was worth. But the Heir kept fast to his word, especially as he now recalled how very true his father's forebodings had been, since he had indeed lost both money and lands through his own folly. Then the steward, finding him unmoved in his decision, reminded him spitefully that the house in which they stood was no longer his, and that the sooner he left it the better.

So the Heir hastened to leave his father's house, and went away with empty pockets; but he did not trouble himself much about that, for he had hosts of friends, who had lived with him for months at a time, and had borrowed his money freely, or used it as if it were their own. If they paid him back only the half of this, he would have enough to live on for many a year.

But now that he was no longer the Lord of Linne, he found that a strange alteration had come over his friends. Some, indeed, appeared to give him a welcome at first; but after a few days they got tired of him, and showed it so plainly that he was only too glad to go away. Others made the silliest excuses as to why they could not receive him into their houses. Some, when he called on them, were never at home; and one and all declared that they had either repaid the money they had formerly borrowed from him, or else had never borrowed it at all. At last, when his clothes had grown very shabby, one of these former friends pretended to take him for a beggar, sent a sixpence out to him, and bade him go away.

So the day came when he was forced to say to himself that he had not one true friend in all the world; and then he remembered his father's words about the Lonesome Lodge, where he was one day to find a friend in need.

Sad at heart and heavy of foot, the Heir of Linne set out to find his last bit of property, since there at least he hoped to have a roof over his head. As for the friend in need, he was not very hopeful about that.

The Lonesome Lodge lay in a deep glen far away across a wild moorland. Very gloomy it looked in the dusk of an autumn day, when the young man came in sight of it. The walls were of dull grey stone and the roof was green with moss. The two little windows were almost hidden by dust and cobwebs and by the branch of a yew-tree which grew right across them, and the grass grew on the path right over the door-stone.

"This is cold comfort!" said the Heir of Linne, as he turned the key in the lock and entered the gloomy chamber. It was perfectly bare, and nearly dark; and

the only furniture was a three-legged stool, on which the unhappy youth took his seat, and gazed sadly down at the empty fireplace. Presently it grew so chill that the Heir took flint and tinder from his pocket, and, having gathered a few sticks together from outside, tried to light a fire. But the hearth was damp, and the sticks would not burn, except for a few minutes, during which they blazed up enough to let him see this strange inscription written plainly across the hearthstone in white letters : " To the graceless youth who has spent all and brought himself to penury. A cold hearthstone is now the only friend thou hast left. Now let it hide thy disgrace and end thy shame and sorrow."

Then the fire flickered out, and it seemed to the young man as though all hope went with it. For it was as if his dead father's voice spoke to him reproachfully from the grave, and, in an agony of repentance, he threw himself on his knees upon the cold grey stone, and began to weep for his foolish, wasted life. The moon rose, and, shining in through the dusty window, filled the little room with a bright, soft radiance. At length the Heir, worn out with grief, was about to rise, when he saw that his movement had displaced the stone, which was slowly tipping up on edge. The moonlight seemed to fall directly on the spot, and was so brilliant that he could see just inside the cavity a little packet, which contained a strip of parchment and a golden key. The parchment told him of a secret door in the wall beside the fire, which the key would unlock, and on opening this he found therein three small chests, so heavy that he could not lift them. But he managed to get them open, and found to his astonishment that the first was full of silver, and the other two of gold pieces ;

while on the top of one of them was written : " With these, my son, I set thee once more upon thy feet. Amend thy life, and leave off they follies, for unless thou hast learnt wisdom thou wilt have but a cold hearthstone after all."

" Amen, indeed," said the Heir of Linne very gravely and quietly ; " so let it be, unless I amend. And here I make my vow that this lesson shall last me as long as I live."

After a while he began to consider how he had best act, and, having thought of a plan, proceeded at once to carry it out. He filled his pockets full of gold, and, having carefully hidden the chests in the secret cupboard, he hung the key of the hiding-place with that of the Lodge round his neck, and, leaving that lonesome spot, set off at a good pace to the house that had once been his. When he arrived, supper had just been served, and he found it very hard to gain admittance. When at last he was allowed to enter, he found a great feast going on, for John o' Scales was entertaining both new friends and old neighbours, and he and his fat wife Joan sat together at the head of the long table. The Heir looked round, and soon recognised several of his old friends, so-called, who were now revelling at his steward's board ; but his attention was soon recalled to John o' Scales, who looked proudly down from his high place, and pretended not to know his old master's son in his ragged, travel-stained clothes.

" Who is this sturdy beggar," said he, " whose coming disturbs our meal ? "

" You know me well," said the Heir of Linne, " and I have come for old sake's sake to ask you to lend me forty pence."

"Be off, you vagabond!" cried John o' Scales. "A curse be on my head if I lend you one penny."

Then the Heir turned to the fat wife, Joan, saying: "Good madam, I pray you give me something in the name of charity."

"Be off, you spendthrift," she answered; "you will get nothing from me."

The Heir of Linne turned, as if he would go away discouraged, when an old farmer sitting near the bottom of the table got up, saying: "Stay, thou Heir of Linne. Thou wast a right good lord to us once upon a time, and thy father before thee. Never did I know thee turn thy face from any poor man, and so I will lend thee forty pence, and forty more to that, if need be. As for thee, John o' Scales, thou mightst at least ask him to sit down with thee at supper, for thou hast gotten his land, and a right good bargain thou hast made on't."

These last words put John o' Scales in a tremendous rage, for he knew it was true, and that others knew it also. He banged his hand on the table, till the wine splashed from the silver cup that had belonged to the Lord of Linne, and cried:

"Now, a curse on my head if I did not lose, and lose heavily, by that bargain!" Then as his guests looked at each other, and smiled, he roared: "'Tis so, and I will prove it too. See here, you Heir of Linne, before this good company I tell you that you shall have your house and lands back again, if you will pay down a hundred pounds less than I gave you for it."

He thought this a fairly safe offer to make to the penniless heir, and what was his astonishment when the young

man looked round at the staring company, and took a bag of gold from each pocket.

"You have heard his offer," said the Heir of Linne; "I call you all to witness." And with these words he flung upon the table the silver luckpenny by which bargains were sealed. "I hold you to your word," said he, "and here, good John, is your money."

Slowly and carefully he counted it out before the astounded steward, and pushing it towards him, said: "The gold is thine and the land is mine, and now am I once more Lord of Linne. But I will deal better with thee than thy deserts, for here is thy hundred pounds into the bargain. But take thyself and thy wife out of my house as soon as may be." Then, turning to the farmer: "For you, good fellow," said he, "you would have lent me forty pence, so here I give thee forty pounds, and make thee keeper of all my woods and forests. And herewith I promise to be a better lord to all of you than ever I was in the old days."

Then all the tenants who were present shouted with joy as they drank the health of their young master; while John o' Scales and his fat wife slunk away, unpitied and unnoticed by all.

And from that time forth all went well with the fortunes of the Heir of Linne.

From "Percy's Reliques," a collection of old ballads. Date unknown.

PRONOUNCING LIST

Below is given a rough idea of the pronunciation of the less familiar names in this book. In many cases the exact sound is not possible to an English person untrained in foreign sounds. Some of the names, through literature, have acquired a modern English pronunciation, and others were differently pronounced in different periods of the languages to which they belong.

a = *a* in "rat"; *ā* = *a* in "father"; *ī* = *i* in "spite"; *ĭ* = *i* in "nick"; *ō* = *o* in "note"; *o͝o* = *oo* in "mood"; *ou* = *ou* in "loud."

Final e must be sounded as a short, obscure vowel, nearly like u in "*u*ppermost." The sound of French g before e and i and of French j is unknown in English. It is similar to z in "azure," and is here represented by zj.

ACHAR, Ak'ar.
Alphege, Al'fayge.
Angys, An'gus.
Ardour, Ar'door.
Ascapard, Ask'apard.
Aurilis-Brosias, Ō'rilis-brō'sias.
Avalon, Avalō.

BACH, Bāk.
Bayiere, Bay'yayr.
Beda (modern spelling Bede), Bayd'e, (modern Beed).
Bedivere, Bed'ivayr (modern Bediveer).
Bellisande, Bel'isand.
Benoist, Bayn'wor.
Beowulf, Bayo'wolf.
Bernlak, Bern'lak.
Birkabeyn, Beer'kabayn.
Breca, Bre'ka.
Brihtnoth, Breet'noth.
Broiefort, Brua'for.
Bruhier, Broo'yay.

CAEDMON, Kad'mon.
Caerleon, Kar'leen.
Caraheu. Kar'ayoo.
Caridwen, Karid'wen.
Cavall, Kava'l.
Chuailgné, Kooal'nyay.
Cleges, Klayzj.
Courtain, Koorta'n.
Cruseward, Kroos'ward.
Cuchulain, Kookoo'lĭn.
Cyneheard, Kin'nehard.
Cynewulf, Kin'newulf.

Egbright, Eg'breet.
Elphin, El'fin.
Ethandune, Ethandoo'n.

FARON, Fa'rō.
Felice, Faylée's.

GAUTIER, Gōteeay'.
Gawayne, Gaway'n.
Gloriande, Glor'iond.
Godrich, God'rik.
Godard, God'ard.
Guthrum, Guth'rum.
Gwion, Gwee'on.
Gwyn, Gwin'.
Gwythir, Gwit'her.
Gwyddno, Gwith'no.

HAVELOK, Hav'lok.
Heorot, Heor'ot.
Hrothgar, Roth'gar } In Old English
Hrunting, Run'ting } the initial h was sounded
Hygelac, Hee'gelak.

IDWEL, Id'wel.
Isumbras, Eesum'brā.

JOSIAN, Jos'ian.
Joure, zjoor.

KAI, Kī.
Kilhugh, Kilhyoo'.
Kynon, Kee'non.

LIR, Leer.
Llevelys, Hleve'lis.
Luned, Leen'ed.
Lynne, Lin.

MABINOGION, Mabinog'yon.
Mac Roth, Mac'Rōt.
Maelgwn, Mīlgoo'n.
Mambraunt, Mambror'nt.
Meaux, Mō.
Meav, Mayv.
Midgard, Mid'gard.
Morgradour, Morgradoo'r.
Modron, Mod'ron.
Moyne, Moin.
Murdour, Mudoo'r.
Maymes, Maym.

NITH, Neeth.

OHTHERE, O'there.
Olwen, O'lwayn.
Owain, O'wīn.

PAPILLON, Papee'yȯ
Penlis, Pen'lee.

ROHAUNT, Ro'ornt.

SADONNE, Sado'n.
Scef, Skef.
Scyld, Skild.
Sigbright, Seeg'breet.
Soudan, Soo'dan.

TALIESIN, Tal'yaysin.
Tegid, Tegeed'.
Truncefyce, Truns'fees.

UBBE, Ub'be.
Uther, Ooth'er.

VOEL, Voil.

WEALTHEOW, Wal'theeō.
Wiglaf, Wiglāf.